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ANNE BOLEYN:

A DRAMATIC POEM.

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THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASWATI MAHAL.

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THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASWATI MAHAL.

INTRODUCTION.

The subject of the following Drama had long appeared to me peculiarly adapted to the purposes of Poetry. I had, some time ago, imagined a sketch, in a great degree similar to that which I have now filled up. The course of professional Study, which led me to the early Annals of our Church, recalled it to my remembrance, and, as it were, forced it on my attention. In the outline of the Plot, and the development of the characters, especially that of Anne Boleyn, I have endeavoured to preserve historical truth: where History is silent, I have given free scope to poetic licence, and introduced a character entirely imaginary,

In endeavouring to embody that awful spirit of fanaticism—the more awful, because strictly conscientious—which was arrayed against our early Reformers, I hope to be considered as writing of those times alone. The representation of the manner in which bigotry hardens into intolerance, intolerance into cruelty and an infringement on the great eternal principles of morality, can never be an unprofitable lesson. The Annals of all Nations, in which Reformation was begun or completed; those of the League in France, of the Low Countries and Spain, as well as of England, will fully bear me out in the picture which I have drawn: but I have no hesitation in asserting that even in those times the wise and good among the Roman Catholics reprobated, as strongly as ourselves, the sanguinary and unprincipled means by which the Power of the Papacy was maintained.

I should observe, that I have, I trust with no unpardonable anachronism, anticipated the perfect organization of that Society, from which, as Robertson has with justice stated, "mankind have derived more advantages, and received greater injuries, than from any other of the religious fraternities." Though its Founder had already made many proselytes, the Society was not formally incorporated till about five years after the death of Anne Boleyn.

It may appear almost superfluous to add, that the manner in which the Poem is written, as well as the religious nature of the interest, must for ever preclude it from public representation.

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASWATI

ANNE BOLEYN,

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CHARACTERS.

KING HENRY VIII.
ARCHBISHOP CRANMER.
STEPHEN GARDINER, *Bishop of Winchester.*
LORD ROCHFORD, *Brother of Queen Anne.*
DUKE *of* NORFOLK.
SIR HENRY NORREYS, } *Attendants on Queen Anne.*
SIR FRANCIS WESTON, }
SIR WILLIAM BRERETON, }
SIR WILLIAM KINGSTON, *Lieutenant of the Tower.*
ANGELO CARAFFA, *a follower of Ignatius Loyola.*
MARK SMEATON.

QUEEN ANNE.
COUNTESS *of* ROCHFORD.
COUNTESS *of* WILTSHIRE, *Mother of Queen Anne.*
MAGDALENE SMEATON.

ANNE BOLEYN.

SCENE.

A small Garden near Westminster.

MARK SMEATON, MAGDALENE SMEATON.

MAGDALENE.

OH welcome, welcome—though I scarcely hoped
That he who long hath dwelt in foreign climes,
And now comes wearing the proud garb of Courts,
Would waste the precious treasure of a thought
On poor forgotten sister Magdalene.

MARK.

Still the same humble tender Magdalene,
Who deems, that none can rate her modest worth
More high than her retiring self. Sweet sister,
I would not wound thy heaven-devoted ears
With the unwonted sounds of worldly flattery;
But in far distant climes, 'mid strangers' faces,

That night was sweetest when I dream'd of thee,
Our native garden here, our little world
Of common joys and sorrows.

MAGDALENE.

Dearest Mark,
The heart deems truth whate'er it wishes true.
And wilt thou now and then steal hither to me,
When thou 'rt not call'd for at the Court? wilt bring
Thy music, such as in the royal Chapel
Thou 'rt wont to sing? Rude though mine ear, it loves
Thy music, brother.

MARK.

Dearest, yes, I 'll bring
All these, and hymns forbidden there; there 's one
Was taught me by a simple fisher boy,
That sail'd the azure tide of that bright bay
That laves the walls of Naples: as he sung—
What time the midnight waves were starr'd with barks,
Each with its single glowworm lamp, that tipt
The waters round with rippling lines of light—

You would have thought Heaven's queen had strew'd
around
Silence, like that among the stars, when pause
The Angels in ecstatic adoration.

MAGDALENE.

Speak on, speak on!—Were it a stranger's voice
That thus discoursed, I could lose days in listening;
But thine——

MARK.

Oh! Magdalène, thou know'st not here
In our chill, damp, and heavy atmosphere,
The power, might, magic, mystery of sweet sounds!
Oh! on some rock to sit, the twilight winds
Breathing all odour by—at intervals
To hear the hymnings of some virgin choir,
With pauses musical as music's self,
Come swelling up from deep and unseen distance:
Or under some vast dome, like Heaven's blue cope,
All full and living with the liquid deluge
Of harmony, till pillars, walls, and aisles,

The altar paintings and cold images,
Catch life and motion, and the weight of feeling
Lies like a load upon the breathless bosom!
But speaking thus, hours will seem minutes, sister,
And——

MAGDALENE.

Thou would'st say farewell. Yet ere we part
I long to speak one word—I dare not say
Of counsel—but the love, whose only study
Is one heart's book, gains deeper knowledge, Mark,
Of its dark leaves, than schools can teach, or man
Learn from his fellow men.

MARK.

Sage monitress!

MAGDALENE.

Oh! Mark, Mark—in one cradle were we laid,
Our souls were born together, bred together;
In all thy thoughts, emotions, my fond love
Anticipated thine own consciousness;
I felt them, ere thyself knew thine own feelings:

And never yet impetuous wish was born
In that warm heart, but till fulfilment crown'd it
Thou wert its slave—its bounden, fetter'd slave.
Oh ! watch thyself, mistrust, fear——

MARK.

What?

MAGDALENE.

Why all things.—
In that loose Court, they say, each hard observance,
Fast, penance, all the rites of holy Church,
Are scoff'd ; the dainty limbs are all too proud
T' endure the chastening sackcloth. Sin is still
Contagious : like herself are those that wait
On that heretical and wicked Queen.

MARK.

The wicked Queen !—oh ! sister, dearest sister,
For the first time I'd see thy pure cheek burn
With penitent tears ; go kneel, and ask Heaven's pardon—
Scourge thy misjudging heart—the wicked Queen !
Heaven's living miracle of all its graces !

There 's not a breathing being in her presence
But watches the least motion of a look,
Th' unutter'd intimation of desire,
And lives upon the hope of doing service,
That done, is like the joy blest Angels feel
In minist'ring to prayers of holiest Saints.
Authority she wears as 'twere her birthright;
And when our rooted knees would grow to earth
In adoration, reassuring gaiety
Makes the soul smile at its own fears.

MAGDALENE.

But, Mark,
Believes she as the Church believes?

MARK.

I know not
What she believes—I see but what she does.
Loose Court, and shameless Queen!—her audience
Is of the wretched, destitute, forlorn:
The usher to that Court is Beggary,
And Want the chamberlain; her flatterers, those

Whose eloquence is full and bursting hearts;
Her parasites, wan troops of starving men
Round the full furnish'd board—pale dowerless maids—
Nuns, like thyself, cast forth from their chaste cloisters
To meet the bitter usage of the world;
While holiest men are ever in her presence:
Nor can their lavish charity exhaust
The treasures of her goodness.

MAGDALENE.

Oh! Mark, Mark—
My only joy on earth—that, if my soul
E'er dream'd of Heaven, wert evermore a part,
Th' intelligible part of its full bliss,
Thou art not warp'd by pride of new opinion?

MARK.

Is 't new t' adore the mingled consummation
Of beauty, gentleness, and goodness?

MAGDALENE.

Cease!
For this, for hearing this, I must do penance—

Fast, weep, and pray ; and, oh ! beware, beware—
The holy Father comes, whose keen eye reads
The inmost soul ; I 've felt him pluck the thought
I dared not speak from its dark sanctuary
I' the heart, and cast it down before mine eyes
Till my soul shuddered at its own corruption.
He sees us not—stand back—'twere ill t' intrude
Upon his saintly privacy, whose soul
Haply is prostrate at Our Lady's feet,
In our behalf, his poor unworthy flock.
Half of his life, our lady Abbess says,
Is spent in Heaven, while the pale body here
Pines in the absence of its nobler guest.

MARK.

How, Angelo!

MAGDALENE.

Peace, peace ; seal lips and ears.

[*They retire.*

Angelo Caraffa.

ANGELO CARAFFA.

They cross'd me, and I needs must follow—to th' Abbey;
T' insult their fathers' graves; to mock the Saints
That from the high empurpled windows glare
On the proud worshippers, whose secret hearts
Disdain their intercession; scarce a lamp
Burnt on the prayerless shrines, and here and there
Some wan sad votress, in Our Lady's chapel,
Listening in vain for the full anthem, told
Her beads, and shrunk from her own lonely voice.
But when I saw the Arch-heretic enrobed
In the cope and pall of mitred Canterbury,
Lift the dread Host with misbelieving hands,
And heard another's voice profane read out,
In their own dissonant and barbarous tongue,
The living word of God, the choking wrath
Convulsed my throat, and hurrying forth I sought

A secret and unechoing place, t' unload
My burthen'd heart!
'Twas the first time—the last
That holy Indignation hath o'erleap'd
Wisdom's strong barriers—the ill-govern'd features
Play'd traitor to the close-wrapt heart.
But thou
That art a part of God's dread majesty,
In whose dusk robe his own disastrous purposes
Th' Almighty veils, twin-born with Destiny,
Inexorable Secrecy! come, cowl
This soul in deep impervious blackness!—Grant
I may deny myself the pride and fame
Of bringing back this loose apostate land
To the true Faith. Be all mine agency
Secret as are the springs of living fire
In the world's centre, bury deep my name,
That mortal eye ne'er read it, till emblazed
Amid the roll of Christ's great Saints and Martyrs
It shake away the oblivious gloom of ages.

Angelo, Mark, Magdalene.

ANGELO.

Ye may approach—the youth, or I mistake,
Of whom Saavedra wrote, whose dulcet voice
And skilful handling the sweet lute were famed
Through Italy—most fair report, young man,
Hath been thy harbinger.

MARK.

Good reverend father,
That men so wise, whose words are treasured counsels
To mightiest Kings, should deign to note a name
Like mine, moves wonder.

ANGELO.

Youth, thou hast a soul,
For which thy spiritual guide must answer,
As for a Monarch's; in her care, the Church
That guards the loftiest, ne'er o'erlooks the meanest.
Thou 'rt new about the Court, and our good Queen,

With gracious affability, will sit
Listening to thy sweet languaged lute; thou 'rt there
In high esteem.

MARK.

Her Highness hath been pleased
To hear me more than once; but word of praise
From her had been a treasure, that my memory
Had laid in store, for my whole life to brood on.

ANGELO (*aside*).

So warm!——I had forgot thy station, youth;
But with the great we rank far less by birth
Than estimation; and the power of ministering
To their delight becomes nobility.

MARK.

What?—says your wisdom so?

ANGELO.

Good youth, I charge thee,
Cherish that modesty that well becomes thee;
But yet if Fame belie thee not, thy powers
May bind high-scop'd Advancement to thy service—

Thou may'st compete ere long with——which affects
Her Majesty most of her servants?

MARK.

Each
Partakes alike of that all-winning ease—
Not the proud condescension, which disdains
Most manifestly when it stoops the lowest—
All are her slaves, seeming almost her equals:
She's loved——

ANGELO.

Enough!—Report speaks bounteously
Of Henry Norreys: he and William Brereton
And Francis Weston, are about her still——

MARK.

Not one, I do believe, would deem his life
Ill barter'd for her service——

ANGELO.

And Lord Rochford,
Her noble brother—as a Poet, youth,
His art is kindred to thine own, its rival

In making the mute air we breathe an element
Of purest intellectual joy—the Queen
To her close privacy admits.

MARK.

I 've heard
She takes delight beyond all words to hear
Our harsher English tongue, by his smooth skill,
And noble Surrey's, and learn'd Wyatt's, flow
Melodious, as the honey-lipp'd Italian.

ANGELO.

'Tis well. Thy orphan'd youth, I learn, Mark Smeaton,
Wants that imperious curb Heaven delegates
To parents' hands; mine order, rank, and station
Give to my counsels th' impress of command:
I charge thee then, by thine own soul—beware—
Should golden honours, as belike they may,
Shower on thee, wear them still with humbleness.
Serve that bewitching but too easy Queen
Assiduously, but still honourably.
Aspire not, by whatever voice thou 'rt summon'd,

To perilous distinction; youth, again
I say, take heed—one single day omit not,
On forfeiture of my paternal care,
To pour thy full confessing soul before me.

MARK.

What can your Wisdom mean?

MAGDALENE.

He means, dear brother,
To merit his poor servants' prayers for this—
Prayers that shall mount before the earliest lark,
Earth's first thanksgiving voice t' indulgent Heaven.
Withdraw, withdraw, he heeds no more—away.

[*Exeunt.*

ANGELO.

That warning was a master-stroke: it brings
The impossible within the scope of thought;
We do forbid but what may come to pass;
And he will brood on it, because forbidden,
Till his whole soul is madness. All the rest
Are full of their proud honour, and disdain
To torture with vain villanous misconstruction

Each innocent phrase to looseness. Cursed woman!
'Gainst whom remorselessness is loftiest duty,
And mercy sin beyond Heaven's grace—think'st thou
To be a Queen, and dare to be a woman!
Play fool upon thy dizzy precipice,
Nor smile, nor word, nor look, nor thought but 's noted
In our dark registers; each playful jest
Is chronicled, and we are rich in all
That 's ocular proof and circumstance of guilt
To jealousy's distemper'd ear.
And thou,
Proud King! the Church's head!—each lustful thought,
Each murtherous deed, is a new link of the chain
By which our slaves are trammell'd: we 'll let slip
Thy own fierce passions, ruthless as the dogs
Of war, to prey on thy obdurate heart;
And they shall drag thee down, base, suppliant,
Beneath our feet—or drive thee maddening on,
An hideous monster of all guilt, to fright
The world from its apostasy, and brand
The Heretic cause with thy eternal shame.

Whitehall.

QUEEN ANNE, ATTENDANTS, *her* ALMONER.

ALMONER.

So please your Majesty, your pensioners
Flock in such hungry and still gathering troops,
The table 's full.

QUEEN.

Then, Sir, spread more, the Queen
Commands it.

ALMONER.

But the cost, your Grace!

QUEEN.

Weigh that
When thou dost serve ourself, not our poor neighbours.
Why sate I down but yesterday, 'mid pomps
And luxuries that might have fed a village?

Go coin those wines, barter for homelier cates
Those candied superfluities.

ALMONER.

It stands not
With the King's honour thus to mulct and limit
Your Highness state.

QUEEN.

Still less, Sir, to contract
And weigh with base frugality the alms
His Grace bestows through me, his humble agent.
The bounty of the King, Heaven's delegate,
Should be as Heaven's: the Sun, that through the grate
Of some barr'd dungeon lights the pallid cheek
Of the poor prisoner, is a gracious gift;
But that which argues the great God of Nature
Is the rich prodigality of light,
That kindles the wide universal sky
And gladdens worlds. But to descend to truths
Of homelier prudence. 'Tis not well to feast
A lazy herd of sleek unlabouring drones.

Most true, Sir; but his Majesty hath pleased
To take some certain Convents and rich Abbeys
Into his royal hands; they that were bred
To sun themselves in careless indolence
Are cast abroad to buffet the hard world
For bare subsistence; even the once mitred Lords
Of manors, benefices, lands, and palaces,
Ill husbanding their limited maintenance,
Are brought to beggary and painful want:
Therefore our bounty must outrun awhile
Our better wisdom.

ALMONER.

I obey your Highness.

QUEEN.

And have our best thanks for your prudent caution
As for your prompt compliance.—
Gracious Heaven!
I thought a throne would give the power of blessing
Illimitable—to speak, were to make glad
All hearts. Alas! the higher we aspire,

MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARA

The wider spreads beneath us the dark scene
Of human wretchedness, which even to lighten
Wants not Heaven's goodness only, but Heaven's wisdom,
While easy mischief waits on meanest minds.
The idiot with a wanton brand may fire
Th' imperial city, a base beggar's brood
Infect a paradise with pestilence,
While deep-laid schemes of princeliest goodness end
In wider evil, and thrice heavier ruin.
Ye smile to hear these solemn arguments
Upon these laughter-loving lips.

LADY ROCHFORD.

Your Highness
Is ever thus, or gladdening with your mirth
Or teaching with your wisdom.

QUEEN.

Lady Rochford,
Might I not add that thou art ever flattering?
A brother's wife should too sincerely love
To pamper a vain heart with praise.

LADY ROCHFORD (*aside*).

Still shamed
And still rebuked—curse on her proud humility!

QUEEN.

Enough of this—in truth the board that led
To this grave reasoning forces oft a smile
Even on Compassion's tearful face: the strange,
The motley groups! the doubts, the awe, the fears,
The pride of beggary! There are, who patch,
As though in honour of the royal feast,
With scarlet and rich hues their loose hung tatters;
And some will creep, as they were led to justice,
Along the hall, and the next instant pledge,
Like jovial courtiers, the Queen's health. But those
Of the old religion move me most. They steal
Reluctant with suspicious steps, each instant
Crossing themselves, to exorcise, no doubt,
The fiends beneath the board: each time they touch
Or dish or flagon, they renew the charm,
As though the viands flavour'd of rank heresy,

And 'twere a deadly sin to taste the dole
Of wicked Gospeller. Last noon came in
Two maids, whose tatter'd veils but ill conceal'd
Their wan and famine sunken cheeks, not worn
With holy fast, but bitter withering want;
Desperate they ate, as conscious of their sin:
Anon a pattering sound of beads I heard,
A voice half breathless muttering broken Aves;
Lo, the good lady Abbess, come to save
Her soul-endanger'd charge; but, sad to tell,
The tempting fumes o'erpower'd her holy rigour,
And the grave mother to the flesh-pots fell.

ATTENDANT.

Madam, the Countess Wiltshire.

Lady Wiltshire.

LADY WILTSHIRE.

Dearest Anne!

My child!—Your Highness' pardon, my old lips

Will never learn th' unwonted reverence;
Still clings the old familiar fondness round me.

QUEEN.

Dear mother, have I ceased to be your child
Being a Queen? for your attendance, Ladies,
We thank you, and ere long may task your service;
But now—in truth I play the Queen but ill
Beside the cradle of my child—and thus
Within my mother's arms——

[*The Ladies retire.*

LADY WILTSHIRE.

Oh! who had thought
Our little playful Anne, all mirth and frolic,
The veriest madcap that ere made a mother
Tremble, rejoice, and smile, and weep at once,
Should sit on England's throne. Nay, if thou bribe not
My garrulous age, I may betray strange tales
Not all beseeming the high sceptred state
Of the Queen's majesty.

QUEEN.

I much mistrust you—
In truth I do

LADY WILTSHIRE.

Well, Heaven be praised for all,
Chiefly that I and thy good Father, Anne,
Have lived with our own eyes to witness it.
And now come when it will, thou 'lt have me buried
In royal state; my funeral pomp shall have
Sceptres and royal scutcheons in its train:
I 'll not endure that my base epitaph
Write me plain wife of good Sir Thomas Boleyn;
I 'll be emblazed in characters of gold,
The mother of Queen Anne.

QUEEN.

Ay, in good time,
Some twenty years or more we 'll think of this:
But, by my faith, best mother, there 's no joy
Of all that wait like chain'd and harness'd slaves
Around the thrones of kings—the pomp, the splendour,

The hearty voice of popular acclaim,
The grave esteem of godly men, the power
Boundless of succouring the distress'd, the grace
And favour of a royal Husband, worthiest,
Were he a peasant, of our fondest dotage;
The consciousness of being an humble means
To build anew Christ's desolated Church—
There's nought more full, sincere, and rapturous—nought—
Than thus repaying all the pains, the prayers
Of her that bore me, nursed me, trained me up
To this high doom, making me like herself.
Mother, all other joys make my cheek smile;
But thy affectionate and blameless pride
Makes gladness speak her truer language—tears
And here comes one will not rebuke our weeping,
My noble Rochford.

RE MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASW

LORD ROCHFORD.

ROCHFORD.

Does your Highness pardon
This bold intrusion?

QUEEN.

I will pardon all
But this cold courteous ceremony:
I would not, Brother, for my throne, forego
My station in thy heart. Wert thou a stranger,
Thy letter'd fame had given thee entrance here.
'Tis such as thou adorn a court, less honour'd
Than honouring; for you Poets hold a court
Which whoso visits not hath lost all title
To that nobility endures for ages,
Where Kings are proud to enter. There's no clime
Nor age, not even the Heaven of Heavens, but sends,
Summon'd by your plumed herald Fantasie,
Its embassage of noblest images

To do you service; and ye entertain them
Right royally, do make them move to music
That they forget the sounds of their own spheres.

ROCHFORD.

Your Highness!

QUEEN.

Nay, your Sister!

ROCHFORD.

Sweet rebuke:
Dear Sister, I 've been toiling in your service,
Or rather turning toil to sweet delight;
I 've been enriching my rude verse with thoughts
I stole from thee in that religious converse
We held some days ago, when we discussed
The idolatrous practices of Rome, adoring
With disproportionate and erring reverence
The Holy Virgin. I 've a hymn, methinks
Will not offend.—Will 't please your Highness hear it?

QUEEN.

Most willingly, it suits the hour—for eve,

That steals so softly on the quiet world,
Seems made for solemn music, even as nature
Breath'd silence over all in earth and Heaven,
Vocal alone with grateful man's thanksgiving.

ROCHFORD.

Here—call Mark Smeaton, bid him bring his lute.

The above, SMEATON.

ROCHFORD.

Now, boy, that tune I told thee of within;
And look thou touch it masterly: her Grace
Hath that nice ear that vibrates to the touch
Of harmony, so tremblingly alive
The slightest discord jars on it like anguish.
Not with that shaking hand—
Look, the Queen smiles.
Right, boy, thou own'st that inspiration.

The Protestant's Hymn to the Virgin.

1.

Oh! Virgin Mother! not with choral hymn
Around the lamp-deck'd altar high and dim,
Where silver bells are faintly ringing,
And odorous censers lightly swinging;
Till blazing forth above, beneath, around,
Rolls the full organ's never-ceasing sound:
Not with the costly gift of gold and gem,
Where thy enshrined image stands,
Loveliest, though fram'd by daring human hands,
And halo'd with thy sun-like diadem:
Not with the deep devotion of the heart,
Close folded arms across the heaving breast,
And words that find no breath, and sighs supprest—
Mary, we seek not thee
With suppliant agony
Of burning tears, that all unbidden start;
To mortal name our jealous souls deny
The incommunicable meed of Deity.

MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARA

2.

And thou, where'er thy everlasting seat—
If ever human prayer, with noise unmeet,
    Up to thy radiant throne on high,
    Ascend through the reluctant sky;
Or earthly music its fond notes intrude
Upon the silence of beatitude:
Lowliest as loveliest among mortal maids!
    With all the grief that may abate
    The changeless bliss of thy empyreal state,
Ever thy sad dejected look upbraids
The misdirected homage, vain and blind;
Aside thou turnest thy offended ears
Where one Hosanna fills th' acclaiming spheres;
        Oh! conscious child of Eve,
        Mary, thy soul doth grieve
At godhead's sacred rite to thee assign'd;
Mourning the rash unholy injury done
To the redeeming name of thy Almighty Son!

3.

Yet ne'er Incarnate Godhead might reside,
Save where his conscious presence glorified;
Thee, therefore, lovelier far we deem
Than eye may see or soul may dream.
Unchanged—unwasted by the pains of earth,
Thou didst bring forth the fair immortal birth:
And Hope and Faith, and deep maternal Joy,
And Love, and not unholy Pride,
With soft unevanescent glory dyed
Thy cheeks, while gazing on the peerless boy;
And surer than prophetic consciousness,
That he was born all human-kind to bless!
The musical and peopled air was dim,
Mary, where'er thy haunt,
With angels visitant,
Nor always did the viewless Seraphim
Stand with their plumed glories unconfest,
To see the Eternal Child while cradled on thy breast.

4.

And what, though in the winter, bleak and wild,
Thou didst bring forth the unregarded child,
The summon'd star made haste to shine
Upon that new-born face divine,
And the low dwelling of the stabled beast
Shone with the homage of the gorgeous East.
Though driven far off to Nilus' reedy shore,
As thou didst slake thy burning feet,
Where o'er the desert fount the arching palm-trees meet:
Still its soft pillow'd charge thy bosom bore;
And thou didst watch in rapture his sweet sleep;
Or gaze, while sportive he thy locks carest,
Or drank the living fountain of thy breast.
Yet, Mary, o'er thy soul
A silent sadness stole,
Nor could thy swelling eyes refuse to weep,
For Rachel, desolate, in agony,
And Bethlehem's mothers childless all but thee.

5.

Nor fail'd thy watchful spirit to behold
The secret inborn Deity unfold:
    Nor e'er without a painless awe,
    The wonderous youth the mother saw;
For in the Baptist's playful love appear'd
The homage of a heart that almost fear'd:
And though in meek subjection still he dwelt
    Beneath thy husband's lowly home;
    Oft from his lips would words mysterious come;
The soul untaught the present Saviour felt.
As more than prophet raptures o'er him broke,
And fuller still the inspiration pour'd,
Half-bow'd to earth unconscious knees adored:
        Mary, before thy sight,
        The wonder-working might,
Prerogative of highest Godhead woke;
Unfearful yet!—when instant at his sign,
The water vessels blush'd with generous wine.

6.

Blest o'er all women! did thy heart repress,
Humble as chaste, each thought of loftiness,
When wonder after wonder burst
Around the child thy bosom nurst;—
The dumb began to sing, the lame to leap;
His unwet footsteps trod the unyielding deep;
Still at his word disease and anguish ceased,
And healthful blood began to flow,
Ruddy, beneath the leper's skin of snow;
And shuddering fiends the tortured soul released;
And from the grave arose the summon'd dead?
Yet, ah! did ne'er thy mother's heart repine,
When he set forth upon his dread design?
Mary, did ne'er thy love
His piteous fate reprove,
When on the rock reposed his houseless head?
Seem'd it not strange to thy officious zeal—
All pains, all sorrows, save his own, to heal?

7.

Yet, oh! how awful, Desolate! to thee,
Thus to have shrined the living Deity!
When underneath the loaded Rood,
Forlorn the childless mother stood:
Then when that voice, whose first articulate breath
Thrill'd her enraptured ear, had now in death
Bequeath'd her to his care whom best he loved;
When the cold death-dew bathed his brow,
And faint the drooping head began to bow,
Wert thou not, saddest, too severely proved?
As in thy sight each rigid limb grew cold,
And the lip whiten'd with the burning thirst,
And the last cry of o'erwrought anguish burst,
Where then the Shiloh's crown,
Mary, the Christ's renown,
By Prophets and Angelic harps foretold?
Was strength to thy undoubting spirit given?
Or did not human love o'erpower thy trust in Heaven?

8.

But when Death's conqueror from the tomb return'd,
Was thine the heart that at his voice ne'er burn'd?
    Follow'd him not thy constant sight,
    Slow melting in Heaven's purest white,
To take his ancient endless seat on high,
On the right hand of Parent Deity?
And when thine earthly pilgrimage was ended,
    We deem not, but that circled round,
    With ringing harps of Heaven's most glorious sound,
Thy spirit, redeem'd through thy Son's blood, ascended:
There evermore in lowliest loftiness,
Meek thou admirest, how that living God,
That fills the Heavens and Earth, in thee abode.
        Mary, we yield to thee
        All but idolatry;
We gaze, admire, and wonder—love and bless:
Pure, blameless, holy, every praise be thine,
All honour save thy Son's, all glory but divine.

SCENE.

The Palace of the Bishop of Winchester.

ANGELO.

More blood! more blood!—three noble brethren more,
From the Carthusian's decimated house[1],
Doom'd to the block—ay, pour it forth like water!
Make your Thames red, till your proud galleys plough
Their way, and leave a sanguine wake behind them:
Set wide the gates of Hell, and summon thence
Murder, enthron'd on your high judgment seat;
Arm her dark sister, lawless Massacre,
With the dread axe of public Execution;
Can Hell, or Earth's confederate Kings prevail
'Gainst the true Church?—But, oh! ye martyr'd souls!
Spirits, with whose saintly blood their robes are wet—
Oh! all-accomplished More, and sainted Fisher,
Rejoice ye not that with your death ye rouse
The fire-wing'd ministers of Heaven's just wrath,

That welcoming your souls to th' abode of bliss,
Stand with spread wings, and ready girt for vengeance!
But ye, the pulpit Captains of the Schism,
Worse than the worst—soul murderers, Hell's Apostles—
Ye would pour oïl into the Church's wounds
That your own parricide hands have rent, and think
They will not plead against you.—Oh! ye blind
To earthly wisdom as Heaven's light, that dare not
Greatly to sin, or, politicly severe,
Crush where ye conquer—ye will stand aloof
From the black scaffold, preach, protest, forswear
All deeds of blood; yet your infected cause
Shall smell of it to latest generations!
Oh fools! to plunge in internecine strife,
Yet pause, and fear to slay:—deserving none,
And by Heaven's throne receiving none, to dream
Of showing mercy; either way ye perish,
Or shed the martyrs' blood, whose dying voices
Arm Earth, Hell, Heaven, 'gainst your ungodly cause;
Abstain, the unchecked recoil of our fierce vengeance
Shall sweep you to the appointed pit of Hell!

ANGELO, GARDINER.

ANGELO.

My Lord of Winchester, thou hast received
Our full credentials from St. Peter's chair?

GARDINER.

Brother in Christ, thou know'st this land rejects
Rome's Bishop and his tyrannous usurpation.

ANGELO.

That Stephen Gardiner owns no power in Rome
I know, nor yet in England. What cares he
For King or Pontiff, so he may maintain
The proud supremacy of Stephen Gardiner.
A second, but a greater Wolsey, thou,
With thine unbounded soul, would'st rule o'er all—
Church, State, the world——

GARDINER.

Italian, thou 'rt too bold——

ANGELO.

Too true, good Islander! but think not, Gardiner,
I or lament or deprecate thy greatness.
What qualities that make man fit to rule
Meet not in Winchester's capacious soul?
The statesman's large and comprehensive mind;
The politician's keen prophetic eye;
The scholar's mastery o'er the realm of knowledge;
Smooth manners, that with courtly art persuade;
The eloquent pen, pregnant with thought profound;
Quickness to penetrate each dark design;
Sagacity to wind the unwilling soul
To his own purpose: wisest in the counsel;
Deep read in books—in man's dark heart still deeper;
Most knowing in all Europe's courts. Blest England,
If she but prize his worth; himself most blest,
If but to his own interests blind, he err not
On his ascendant path——

GARDINER.

Your meaning, brother?

ANGELO.

A Churchman, and abase the Church's rule!
To wrest the thunder from his awful grasp,
Whose delegates are we, as he is Heaven's,
And place it in the temporal tyrant's hands,
That hath no scope nor end but his own pride
And carnal lust of sway! Rome covets power,
But for her sons, with wholesome tyranny,
To their own weal, to govern kings and nations.
Oh! traitor to thy people, King, and God,
As to thyself! to cast away the sceptre
That sways man's soul to his immortal vantage!
Son of the Holy Church, I exorcise
The fiend of disobedience from thine heart;
By all thou lov'st—pomp, majesty, dominion,
By all thou hat'st—th' apostate cause and crew,
Th' all powerful Cranmer!—ay, I see thy cheek
Blanch, thy low quivering lip—by all thou fear'st,
By all thou hop'st, thou 'rt ours, thou 'rt Rome's, thou 'rt
Heaven's!

GARDINER.

Good Father, walls have ears—the treacherous air,
With terrible delation, wanders round
The thrones of Kings.

ANGELO.

Thou think'st not, I or Rome
Would urge a rashness, which might wreck our cause:
Would have thee cast this wise dissembling off,
By which thou hast won the easy confidence
Of foolish heretics: be supple still,
And seeming true, thou 'rt worthier of our trust.
We know thy heart our own, and lend awhile
Thy tongue, thy pen, to the proud King, t' abase him
To a more abject slave of thee and Rome.
Now hear me, Prelate, glut thine ear with tidings,
For there are dark and deep delved plots, that scape
Even Gardiner's lynx-eyed sight—thy soul shall laugh.
The Queen—the Boleyn—the false harlot heretic—
She 's in our toils—lost, doom'd ——

GARDINER.

I know the King
Is fallen away to a new lust, and hates
Where once he doted.—But her death!—

ANGELO.

What! versed
In courts like Gardiner, and not know how close
Death waits upon the blasting hate of Kings?
I tell thee, she shall die—die on a scaffold!
Die branded like a base adulteress!—
Die like a heretic—the Church's foe!—
Die unabsolved, unhousel'd—die for ever!

GARDINER.

Ay, but her blameless life; the love she wins
By subtle sorcery from every rank.

ANGELO.

Blameless!—an heretic avow'd, proclaim'd,
The nursing mother of Apostasy!
Heap crime on crime, load all her soul with blackness,
Make her name hideous to the end of time;

Yet is she not, to a true son of the Church,
More odious, more abominable—all sins
Are in that one! Adultery, murder, nought
Is wanting but desire or meet occasion,
And the loose heart gives way.

GARDINER.

But this Jane Seymour
Is of no better brood.

ANGELO.

What reck we who
Or what she is, she shall give place t' another,
Another still, till the fierce flame burns out,
And shame, remorse, and horror, all the furies
That howl and madden round the guilty bed,
Seize on the abject Monarch! He shall lick
The dust beneath our feet, and pay what price
The Church ordain, for tardy reconcilement.

GARDINER.

Brother, draw near! thy speech hath bodied forth
What hath come floating o'er my secret thought.

ANGELO.

And own'st thou not Heaven's manifest inspiration?

GARDINER.

So thou wilt bring to pass what Gardiner left
In unaccomplish'd vision! Man of men,
What fame shall wait, what canonizing glory
On sainted Angelo.

ANGELO.

While Stephen Gardiner
Must sink into the baser rank. Oh! fear not,
Nor jealously mistrust me, lest I cross
Thy upward path: I have forsworn the world,
Not with the formal oaths that burst like flax,
But those that chain the soul with triple iron.
Earth hath no guerdon I may covet, none
I may enjoy.—Thou, Stephen Gardiner,
Shalt rule submissive Prelates, Peers and Kings,
Loftiest in station, as in mind the mightiest;
And a perpetual noon of golden power
Shall blaze around thy lordly mitred state.

I 'm girt for other journeys: at that hour,
When all but crown'd the righteous work, this Isle
Half bow'd again to the Holy See, I go
Far in some savage land unknown, remote
From civilized or reasonable life,
From letters, arts—where wild men howl around
Their blood stain'd altars—to uplift th' unknown,
Unawful Crucifix: I go to pine
With famine; waste with slow disease; the loathing
And scorn of men. And when thy race is run,
Thou, Winchester, in marble cemetery,
Where thy cathedral roof, like some rich grove,
Spreads o'er, and all the walls with 'scutcheons blaze,
Shalt lie. While anthem'd choirs and pealing organs,
And incense clouds, and a bright heaven of lamps,
Shall solemnize thy gorgeous obsequies;
O'er my unsepulchred and houseless bones,
Cast on the barren beach of the salt sea,
Or arid desert, where the vulture flaps
Her dreary wings, shall never wandering Priest

Or bid his beads or say one passing pray'r.
Thy memory shall live in this land's records
While the sea girds the isle; but mine shall perish
As utterly as some base beggar's child
That unbaptiz'd drops like abortive fruit
Into unhallow'd grave.

GARDINER.

Impossible!
Rome cannot waste on such wild service minds
Like thine, nor they endure the base obedience.

ANGELO.

Man of this world, thou know'st not those who tread
The steps of great Ignatius, those that bear
The name of Jesus and his Cross. I 've sunk
For ever title, rank, wealth—even my being;
And, self annihilated, boast myself
A limb, a nameless limb, of that vast body
That shall bespread the world, uncheck'd, untrac'd—
Like God's own presence, every where, yet no where—
Th' invisible control, by which Rome rules

The universal mind of man. On me
My Father's palace gates no more shall open,
I own no more my proud ancestral name,
I have no property even in these weeds,
These coarse and simple weeds I wear; nor will,
Nor passion, nor affection, nor the love
Of kindred touch this earth-estranged heart;
My personal being is absorbed and dead.
Thou think'st it much with cilice, scourge, and fast
To macerate thy all-too pamper'd body,
That thy sere heart is seal'd to woman's love,
That child shall never climb thy knees, nor call thee
His father:—on the altar of my God
I've laid a nobler sacrifice, a soul
Conscious it might have compass'd empire.—This
I've done; and in no brief and frantic fit
Of youthful lust ungratified—in the hour
Of disappointed pride. A noble born
Of Rome's patrician blood, rich, letter'd, versed
In the affairs of men; no monkish dreamer

Hearing Heaven's summons in ecstatic vision.
God spoke within this heart but with the voice
Of stern deliberate duty, and I rose
Resolved to sail the flood, to tread the fire—
That 's nought—to quench all natural compunction;
To know nor right nor wrong, nor crime nor virtue,
But as subservient to Rome's cause and Heaven's.
I 've school'd my haughty soul to subtlest craft,
I 've strung my tender heart to bloodiest havoc,
And stand prepared to wear the martyr's flames
Like nuptial robes ;—far worse, to drag to the stake
My friend, the brother of my soul—if thus
I sear the hydra heads of heresy.

GARDINER.

Think not thine order, brother, nor thy tenets,
Sublime as that unquestioning devotion
With which God's Seraphim perform his mandates,
Unknown, unnoticed, unobserved. I lay
The volume of this heart, that man ne'er read,
Before thee. Here is hate of heresy,

Deep, desperate as thine own. In the dead night,
And in the secret prayers of my dark chamber,
Like thee I cry, Holy and True, how long—
Oh! when will they blaze up and gladden heaven,
The glorious purifying fires, and purge
The land of its pollutions; when the Church
Its pure and virgin whiteness rearray,
And its true Sons shake off dissembling darkness?

ANGELO.

Oh! Gardiner, beware! No lust of vengeance,
No carnal hate, nor hope of worldly triumph,
Must leaven our heroic zeal: God's will
Its sole commission, its sole end God's glory.
We must gird up our souls to this high service,
Alike subdue and bend our pride and passions
To our great scope; with nought too stern or dread
But that we'll on relentless, nought too base
But we will stoop—much is already done—

GARDINER.

Enough, I ask no more, would know no more.

I'll stand aloof, and wait in holy hope
Th' appointed hour.

ANGELO.

In safety reap the harvest
Sown in the sweat of other's brows. 'Tis well,
Thus shall it be, thus best the cause will prosper;
And, prosper but the cause, my work is done.

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SA
MAHAL.

Whitehall.

QUEEN (*dismissing her ladies*).

Away—we are not used to order twice;
Away—depart.—

I am alone—alone—
Nor that cold hateful pomp of fawning faces
Pursues me, nor the true officious love
Of those whose hearts I would not wring, by seeming

The wretch I am: so pour thee forth, mine heart,
Pour thy full tide of bitterness; for Queens
Must weep in secret when they weep. I saw it—
'Twas no foul vision—with unblinded eyes
I saw it: his fond hands, as once in mine,
Were wreath'd in hers; he gazed upon her face
Even with those sorcerous eyes, no woman looks at—
I know it, ah! too well—nor madly dote.
That eloquence, the self-same burning words
That seize the awe-struck soul, when weakest, thrill'd
Her vainly-deaf averted ears.—Oh, Heaven!
I thank thee that I cursed her not, nor him.
Jane Seymour, like a sister did I deem thee;
But what of that? Thou 'rt heaven-ordain'd to visit
Her sins upon the head of her that dared
To love, to wed another's lord. May'st thou
Ne'er know the racking anguish of this hour,
The desolation of this heart! But thou,
Oh! thou, my crime, my madness! thou on whom
The loftiest woman had been proud to dote,

Had he been master of a straw roof'd cottage!
Was 't just to awe, to dazzle the young mind,
That deem'd its transport loyal admiration,
Submissive duty all, till it awoke
And found it thrilling, deepest woman's love?
Too late, too early disabused—would Heaven
That I were still abused! Long, long I 've felt
Love's bonds fall one by one from thy pall'd heart.
Oh! the fond falsehoods of my credulous soul!
War, policy, religion, all the cares
Of kingdoms, Europe's fate within thy hands,
I pleaded to myself to justify
Thy cold estrangement.
Well, 'tis o'er, and I
Must sit alone on my cold eminence,
All women's envy, mine own scorn and pity.
And all the sweetness of these virgin lips,
And all the pureness of this virgin bosom,
And all the fondness of this virgin heart,
Forgotten, turn'd to scorn—perchance to loathing.
Heaven! was no way but this, and none but He

To scourge this guilty heart? Thy will be done.
I 've still a noble Father, and a Brother,
And, Powers of grace! my Mother—kill her not,
Break not her heart,—for sure 'twill break to hear it.
My child, my child, thou only wilt not feel it:
Thy parent o'er thy face may weep, nor thou
Be sadder for her misery; thou wilt love me
Though thy false father scorn and loathe. My Mother—
Oh! ne'er before would I have fled thy presence:
Betray me not, my tear swoln eyes.

Queen, Lady Wiltshire.

LADY WILTSHIRE.

Dear Anne,

I come to task thy goodness: thou must use
That witching influence none e'er resists;
That, with a sweet and pardonable treason
Makes the King's Grace thy slave, nor leaves him pow'r
To think or speak but at thy pleasure——

QUEEN (*aside*).

Heaven!

Each word wrings blood from my torn heart.

LADY WILTSHIRE.

In truth,

There never lived who could refuse thee ought;
For thou wert never known to ask amiss.
But, thou 'rt all tears.

QUEEN.

Nought—nought—thy story, Mother.

LADY WILTSHIRE.

Ay, nothing sure will chase away thy weakness,
Be 't of the body or the mind, so soon
As that sweet consciousness that thou art using
The power Heaven gave thee in Heaven's cause. His
Grace
The Primate waits without t' implore your Highness,
That the old high-born Prior of the Carthusians,
And two right noble brethren of that house,
That, obstinate and self will'd, still subscribe not

The King's supreme dominion, may find mercy,
Nor perish on the ignominious scaffold.

QUEEN.

My Lord of Canterbury at our door!
The presence of that righteous man, dear Mother,
Breathes sanctity as though from Heaven; our hearts
O'erflow at once with prayer and holiest thoughts.
Admit his Grace.

The above. CRANMER.

QUEEN.

Your blessing, holy Father.

CRANMER.

Heaven save your Highness! But, remember, Lady,
Prayers of anointed Priests or mitred Prelates
Are poor and valueless to such as come
From those that wear Christ's truest livery,
The wretched and the broken hearted.

QUEEN (*aside*).

Heaven,
I own thy voice—then mine are surely heard.

CRANMER.

I 'll teach your Grace to do Heaven violence,
By shrining your blest name in vows of men,
From death released, from cruel public death.
The Countess Wiltshire hath made known our suit;
And though my soul abhor the wilful hardness
Of these proud men, yet they were nursed in error—
In error, but for all-enlightening grace,
That still had darken'd our own souls. Were Heaven
Extreme t' avenge its outraged majesty,
Would the red roaring thunder ever cease?
And shall the axe earth's injured Monarchs wield
Be never satiate with the offending blood?

QUEEN.

Had I the power!

CRANMER.

The power! thou 'st ever been

The rainbow o'er the awful throne. The King,
That lives but in thy presence, ne'er disdain'd
Thy righteous supplication. Oh! great Queen,
Our cause, the Gospel cause, the cause of Christ,
Is spotted o'er with shame. Rude sacrilege
Usurps the name of godly Reformation,
And revels in the spoil of shrine and altar.
Men have cast down the incensed heathenish image
To worship with more foul idolatry
The gold of which 'twas wrought; and all the blood
The too relentless Law for Treason sheds,
Attaints our blameless faith of direst cruelty.

QUEEN (*aside*).

More woe, more woe—to know these holy hopes,
This noble trust, misplaced and frustrate all!
Your Grace o'ervalues our poor influence,
Such as it is.

LADY WILTSHIRE.

The King!

QUEEN.

I'll know the worst.
Dear Mother, leave us. Come contempt or shame,
She must not witness it: but he the rather
Will seek to compensate the heart's deep wrongs
By outward graciousness. Wretch, wretch myself,
I may relieve the wretchedness of others:—
Be't as it may, the world shall never know
Through me the secret of his sin, his falsehood,
But deem him by my love the gentlest husband
As the most noble Monarch upon Earth.

King Henry.

KING.

Refuse our mandate—shut their Abbey gates
Against our Poursuivants—refuse our oaths—
Now, by St. Paul, not one of them shall wear
His shaven crown on his audacious shoulders!

CRANMER.

Your Majesty will hear your faithful servant.

KING.

I 'll none of it—their heads or their allegiance.
God's death ! have all our Parliament and Peers,
Our Rev'rend Bishops, given their hands and seals,
And shall we thus be mocked and set at nought
By beggarly and barefoot monks ? Archbishop,
Out of our love to thine own reverend person,
We do refuse thy most unwise petition.
Good foolish man, not one of them but urged
By that old Priest of the Seven Hills would burn us,
Body and soul. We 'll have no Kings but one,
None but ourself.—Tut, not a word. How now ?
What, Nan ? what blank ? what all a mort ? Thy jests,
And thy quaint sayings, and thy smiles——

QUEEN.

My Liege,
I have been sued to be a suppliant
For those that, fall'n beneath thine high displeasure——

KING.

'Sdeath! ye 've our answer—as I pass'd but now
Jane Seymour was set on t' entreat our mercy;
We yielded not, nor thought of being wearied
At every step with the old tedious tale—
Art answer'd?

QUEEN.

What I am, I owe your Grace,
And in most deep humility confess it;
But being as I am, your Grace's wife,
I knew not that my maid's rejected prayer
Precluded further speech——

KING.

Why, how now, wayward!
Your maid! good truth, Sir Thomas Boleyn's daughter 's
Right nobly served. I 'd have you know, proud woman,
What the King gives, the King may take away—
Who raised up one from dust, may raise another.
Look to thyself, I say—thou may'st have cause;
Look, and be wise—be humble. For your Grace

We 've business in our Council—not a word—
Our Queen's our subject still.

QUEEN *(alone)*.

And this is he,
The flower of the world's chivalry, most courtly
Where met the splendor of all courts! When Europe
Sent its three Sov'reigns to that Golden field,
Which won all eyes with liberal noble bearing?
Which charm'd all ears with high and gracious speech?
Which made all hearts his slaves by inbred worth
But English Henry? by his pattern all
Moved, spoke, rode, tilted, shaped their dress, their language,
And he that most resembled England's King
Was kingliest in the esteem of all. This he
That lay whole hours before my worshipp'd feet,
Making the air melodious with his words?
So fearful to offend, having offended
So fearful of his pardon, not myself
More jealous of my maiden modesty;

The bridegroom of my youth, my infant's Father!
Ah! me, my rash and inconsiderate speech,
My pride, hath wrought from his too hasty nature
This shame upon mine head: he'll turn, he'll come
My prodigal back to mine heart—if not,
I'm born his subject, sworn before high Heaven
His faithful wife; then let him cast me from him,
Spurn, trample me to dust—the foe, the stranger
That owns no law of kindred, blood, or duty,
Is taught, where every word is Heaven's own oracle,
To love where most he's hated. I will live
On the delicious memory of the past,
And bless him so for my few years of bliss,
My lips shall find no time for harsh reproach;
I'll be as one of those sweet flowers, that crush'd
By the contemptuous foot, winds closer round it,
And breathes in every step its richest odours.

TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASWATI MAHAL

An Apartment in Westminster.

Angelo, Lady Rochford.

ANGELO.

In that proud Prelate's heart a noble chord [2]
I touch'd, now harp we on a baser string.
The Lady Rochford! thou art here to tell me
That thou fulfill'st the terms on which the Church,
In its high plenitude of power, absolves
The guilty soul.

LADY ROCHFORD.

I come, Sir, to advise
With your wise sanctity.

ANGELO.

We've judged already,
And look but for obedience—hast thou scatter'd
Those hints and seeds of hate in the King's path,
That he behold this Queen in her true colours?

LADY ROCHFORD.

I have; with zeal so fatal, with success
So manifest, mine inmost soul recoils
At the base service.

ANGELO.

Hast obtain'd that paper
In Lady Wingfield's hand?

LADY ROCHFORD.

'Tis here.

ANGELO.

Good! good!—

LADY ROCHFORD.

Inexorable!—must I show no mercy?
Must crime be still atoned by crime? Oh! think,
She is my husband's sister—his, the bridegroom
Of my fond youth——

ANGELO.

To whom thou art so true
And faithful!

LADY ROCHFORD.

Ha! what need of words to thee,
That read'st the inmost depths of this dark heart
More clearly than myself—I hate that husband,
For that I've injured him so deeply; hate
Her virtue that reproaches mine own shame:
But yet to slander her pure fame——

ANGELO.

You said
Erewhile you doubted her yourself.

LADY ROCHFORD.

The sinful
Have a base interest to drag down the holy
To their own level. Set me some strange penance,
Shall grind the flesh, and wring the heart's-blood forth;
Oh! any thing but this base wicked service!

ANGELO.

Thou wilt do all but what the Church commands.
What is it for a life like thine—a life
That doth confess, bewail, forswear its sins,

But with new zest t' indulge—that com'st so oft
With the foul tale, that I do fear to breathe
The tainted air of my confessional?
For such a life is not that place ordain'd
Where air is fire, life pain, and language howling?

LADY ROCHFORD.

Oh! horror!

ANGELO.

Look that thou perform our bidding
To the strict letter, the extremest point,
Wary and secret, as becomes a servant
Would merit grace and favour.

LADY ROCHFORD.

I'm no servant—
A slave—a lash'd, a crouching, abject slave,
In the iron bondage of my sins!

ANGELO.

Ungrateful!
When I might hurl thee, black with malediction,
Where all thy direst visions of remorse,

The racking moments of remember'd crime,
The fangs of Conscience tearing at thy heart,
Thy tossing, feverish, spectre-staring midnights,
Would seem remission, peace, delight to years
Interminable——

LADY ROCHFORD.

Oh! my soul! my soul!

ANGELO.

And I have taught thee how to merit favour
From those to whom the eternal keys are given—
Tinged your black desperation with the hue
Of hope——Away! back to thy duty—watch!
And those who weigh in the everlasting scales
Service against rebellion, and obedience
Against transgression, may at length strike down
The balance, and pronounce thee what thou dar'st not—
Thou dost not—hope may be thy lot.—Away!

The Garden, as before.

Mark Smeaton, Magdalene Smeaton.

MAGDALENE.

My brother!

MARK.

Oh! her voice—it will not cease—
It sounds within my ears, within my heart.
And thou, my harp once loved, but now a treasure
Which kingdoms will not buy; of her sweet tones
Thou 'lt keep the perfume, as the Arabian air
The smell of spices.

MAGDALENE.

Mark, thou 'rt strangely moved;
Speak to me—keep from her no jealous secret,
From her who loves thee with so whole a heart:
Nor thy unkindness, were 't in thy soft nature—
Nor sorrows, they would but endear thee more—

Nor even thy sins, if that way I could fear thee—
Could e'er estrange——

MARK.

The Queen! the Queen! my sister:
She sent for me—she made me sit before her.
As my hand trembled on my lute, she smiled
With gracious playfulness—oh! what a store
Of precious memories I've treasured up—
Look, motion, word, like relics, have I shrined them
In the heart's sanctuary, where all my thoughts
Shall come in daily pilgrimage devout
Till I am dust and clay. I miserable,
With such a refuge! sinful, with the power
Of her controlling holiness about me!

MAGDALENE.

Oh! brother, brother, my misgiving heart
Recoils, it knows not why, from words that sound
Like dangerous profanation: I have forsworn
All love but that which cloister'd nuns may feel
Before the bleeding crucifix; but yet

I feel that there is sin in thy wild language,
Sin, not less deep in thought because in deed
Impossible.—Lo! Father Angelo.

MARK.

This awful man again!—must we ne'er meet
But his appalling look, inscrutable
Yet scrutinizing all, must cite to judgment
Each passing thought, each word, each wish——

MAGDALENE.

Mark, Mark,

Do any but the guilty dread the presence
Of holiest men? He comes to visit here
The mother of my youth, whose outcast age
Hath none but me, of all our scatter'd convent,
To smooth her dying pillow, watch her wants;
And none but Father Angelo t' attend her,
So constantly as though no soul but hers
Needed his zealous function.

MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASW

Angelo. The above.

ANGELO.

So, fair youth,
Our prophecies fall true—thou 'rt i' the sunshine.
Last eve, I ask not, if the dangerous song
Beseem'd a son of Holy Church—that sin
Be theirs not thine.

MARK.

How knew he this?

ANGELO.

Had those
That take in charge th' eternal souls of men
No ways of knowledge to the vulgar eye
Inscrutable, our task were ill fulfill'd.
So tell me, youth, and look that thou speak truth,
Truth to the word, the letter, even the tone—
Fell no peculiar private passages,
Nor word, nor sign, nay, nor familiar motion,

Emphatic tone, nor more expressive pause,
Between thyself and the Queen's Grace?

MARK.

Good Sir,
Think on my baseness and her state——

ANGELO.

So young
And so dishonest! Boy, look to 't! Thy soul,
Thy soul that lives in bliss or dies for ever,
Is on the hazard (but I speak in love,
And not in anger) spake she not more gently?
Glanced not her eye more kindly than 'twas wont?
Drank not her ears thy songs with longer rapture?
Awes not her presence less, and charms the more?—
Boy, boy, take heed—be warn'd, be wise.

MARK.

Sir, Sir,
Is 't possible, in human nature! where,
In History or Legend, wild and marvellous,
Is 't written, that a Queen—a Queen like her—

The Queen of Queens in beauty and in goodness,
Stoop'd to consider one like me?

ANGELO.

This life
Hath strange vicissitudes. This Queen, this partner
Of England's throne, I can remember well
The Duchess of Alençon once esteem'd
Of note scarce higher in her royal court
Than thou in England's—so, once more, beware.
There is no price man's enemy will not pay
For one immortal soul. Now, the good Abbess—
Daughter, advance—how fares it with your charge?

MAGDALENE.

Sir, longing for your presence, as the blind
For light: your holy words breathe deeper calmness
O'er all her frame, than medicine's opiate drugs;
Her only fear of death is lest she want
Your parting benediction.

ANGELO.

In—I'll follow.

MARK.

Will he not warn me not to wing the air,
Lest I should fly too near the parching Sun,
And shrivel into dust ?—To doubt his wisdom
Were to impeach man's general estimate;
T' arraign his charity would give the lie
To a whole life of painful sanctity,
And slur th' anointed Priesthood with contempt.
Yet her—of her to speak, to think, t' imagine
Less than the purest, chastest, holiest, best—
An Angel by Heaven's providence unplumed,
Lest, weary of this tainting world, she fly
Untimely to her native skies; and I,
A poor, unknown, a homeless, friendless boy——
  The more I think the wilder grow my thoughts,
And every thought is stamp'd with her bright image;
She is my world of fantasy, each sound
Is as her voice, each gleam of light her look,
And midnight hath no vision but of her.

Whitehall.

QUEEN *and Ladies,*

SIR HENRY NORREYS, SIR FRANCIS WESTON, SIR WILLIAM BRERETON, MARK SMEATON.

NORREYS.

Your Majesty will grace the tilt to-day?

QUEEN.

The King so wills it: mine obedience rather
Than mine own humour sways my choice.

NORREYS.

I had dared
To hope that he, your Grace has deign'd to name
Your Knight, being Champion of the ring, your Highness
Had given him victory by your presence.

QUEEN.

Norreys,
Trust me, I wish thee all that proud success
Thy valour and thy truth deserve.

NORREYS.

That wish
Is triumph—and my vaunting adversaries
Are strewn already at my feet.

QUEEN.

Sir Henry,
This language breathes of the blithe air of France;
It brings back recollections of my youth,
When all my life was like a jocund dream,
Or air of gayest music:—but, time presses—
So, Gentlemen, in the old Knightly phrase,
Go bear you bravely for your Mistress' sake.

WESTON.

Our Mistress thus commanding, what true Knight
Can fail or falter.

QUEEN.

Courteous words, Sir Francis;
But I mistake me or that name calls up
Another—and, in truth, a fairer lady.

WESTON.

Not—as I live.

QUEEN.

Take heed! false oath, false Knight:
Enough of this—

NORREYS.

We kiss your Highness' hands,
And with this talisman of strength set forth.

QUEEN.

Heaven prosper you!

[MARK SMEATON *kneels also.*

How now? thou 'rt over-bold:
Thou dost forget thy rank and station, youth;
Thou 'rt not, I deem, of gentle blood.

MARK.

No, no,
A look suffices me.

QUEEN.

Truth, noble Sirs,

Your gallantry 's infectious; this poor youth
Must need admire and imitate your courtesies:
Take heed that thou offend no more—be modest,
As thou wert wont. And now to horse, Sir Knights—
Go forward, and Heaven speed the brave and noble!

So now to Greenwich, to look gay and light
As this May morning, with a heart as heavy
As dull November; to be thought the happiest,
Be the most wretched of all womankind.

[*Exeunt.*

Near Whitehall.

GARDINER *and* ANGELO.

ANGELO.

My Lord of Winchester—thou 'st seen the King?

GARDINER.

I 've seen a raging madman loose; he came
From Greenwich at full speed; their horses seem'd
Like those who ride for life from a lost battle:—
What hath befallen?

ANGELO.

The game is won ere played!
It fires beyond our hopes, the sulphurous train
Flames up, they 're hurl'd aloft, but not to Heaven.
Wake, Hell! and lift thy gates; and ye, that tenant
The deepest, darkest, most infuriate pit,
Th' abyss of all abysses, blackest blackness,
Where that most damning sin, the damning others,
With direst, most remorseless expiation,

Howls out its drear eternity, arouse
The myriad voices of your wailing; loud
As when the fleshly Luther, or the chief
Of his cursed crew have one by one gone down
To tread your furnace chambers!—Rise! prepare
The throne of fire, the crown of eating flames!
She comes—the Queen, the fatal Queen, whose beauty
Hath been to England worse, more full of peril,
Than Helen's was to Troy, hath seal'd for death,
For death eternal, irremediable,
Whole generations of her godless sons,
And made her stately church a heap of ruin!

GARDINER.

I am no heretic: why keep me thus
Upon the rack?

ANGELO.

When slightest accidents
Lead to effects that change the doom of nations,
Dost thou not read the visible hand of Heaven?

GARDINER.

Who questions it?

ANGELO.

Why then behold—adore it!
My Lord, we 're wise and politic, but yet
A foolish kerchief falling to the ground
Shall more advance our high and righteous cause
Than months of subtlest craft.

GARDINER.

Explain.

ANGELO.

I stood
Within the tilt-yard, not to take delight
Carnal, unpriestly, in the worldly pageant:
Though, Heaven forgive me! when the trumpets blew,
And the lists fell, and Knights as brave, and full
Of valour as their steeds of fire, wheel'd forth,
And moved in troops or single, orderly
As youths and maidens in a village dance,
Or shot, like swooping hawks, in straight career;

The old Caraffa rose within my breast—
Struggled my soul with haughty recollections
Of when I rode through the outpour'd streets of Rome,
Enamouring all the youth of Italy
With envy of my noble horsemanship.
But I rebuked myself, and thought how Heaven
Had taught me loftier mastery, to rein
And curb with salutary governance
Th' unmanaged souls of men. But to our purpose;
Even at the instant, when all spears were levell'd,
And rapid as the arblast bolt, the Knights
Spurr'd one by one to the ring, when breathless leant
The Ladies from their galleries—from the Queen's
A handkerchief was seen to fall; but while
Floating it dallied on the air, a Knight,
Sir Henry Norreys, as I learnt, stoop'd down,
Caught, wreath'd it in his plume, regain'd his spear,
And smote right home the quivering ring: th' acclaim
Burst forth like roaring waters, but the King

MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S S

Sprang up, and call'd to horse, while tumult wild
Broke up the marr'd and frighted ceremony.

GARDINER.

Something of this I augur'd: as the King
Swept furious by, he beckon'd me; yet seem'd
Too busied with his wrathful thoughts to heed
Whom thus he summon'd; and I heard him mutter
" The saucy groom !" and terms, which to repeat
Were not o'erfitting priestly lips, but coupled
With the Queen's name most strangely. Seeing this,
I thought it in mine office to administer
Grave ghostly admonition, mingled well
With certain homily and pulpit phrases
Of man's ingratitude, and gracious Kings
Whose bounties are abused; the general looseness
Of the age. The more I spake, the more he madden'd,
As though my words were oil on fire.

ANGELO.

'Twas well,
But must be better; I have further tidings.

I pass'd the Tower, and saw Sir William Kingston,
Summon'd, 'twas said, with special haste, come forth
Among his archers.

GARDINER.

Ha! there 's more in this.

ANGELO.

Prelate, there shall be—where 's the King?

GARDINER.

I left him
Near the apartment of Jane Seymour.

ANGELO.

Good!
The field of battle where we have them all
At vantage.—Lead me to him.

GARDINER.

Thee?

ANGELO.

What! jealous still? Then go thyself—be speedy.
Thou lovest the King, my Lord of Winchester:
Suits it thy reverence, then, and holy station,

Nearest his bosom, in his closest counsels,
That he retain a wanton in his bosom,
When there is one hath damning evidence
At peril of his life?

GARDINER.

Where? who?

ANGELO.

The Man
Am I.——Thou see'st, my Lord, thine all the glory,
The gratitude for this great service—mine
The peril. Strike, strike now, strike home, my Lord.

GARDINER.

I see it: as we pass, thou shalt unfold
All that remains behind; and, trust me, Brother,
Thou shalt have thy reward.

ANGELO.

I shall—in Heaven.

Whitehall.

QUEEN.

What can it mean? Each face as I pass'd by
Was gathering blackness; and a silent pity
Sate upon brows that turn'd aside to avoid me.
The menials are infected: not a groom,
As I descended from my litter, lent
His hand to aid me; and my anti-rooms
Are mute and empty, even as though the plague
Had tainted all the air. Well, what of this?—
Oh, God of Grace! thou 'rt bounteous still! Fall off
The cumbrous trappings and appendages
Of mine uneasy state, thou leav'st me yet
One far too old and one too young to change:
My child, my Mother, and my Innocence,
Shall make me up a blest society,
An Empress girt about with handmaid-queens

Might envy.—At her charge I left my Mother,
Her charge, whose joy renews her youth, and makes her
Like some fond nurse o'er her first born——

Lady Wiltshire.

LADY WILTSHIRE.

Come, come,
She sleeps—thyself, dear Anne, not half so lovely:
Come sit by her, and gaze on her, for hours,
For days: a violet on a bed of snow,
A pearl in ivory set, the brightest star
Where all are bright in the soft milky way—
There 's no similitude she doth not shame.
Her forehead arch'd by Heaven to fit a crown!
I 've almost wish'd thou ne'er shouldst bear a boy,
Dear Anne, to bar her from the throne she 's born to.

QUEEN.

Mother, I follow thee.

The above. KINGSTON *and* GUARD.

QUEEN.

Ha! in my chamber
Arm'd men! Sir William Kingston, thou 'rt o'er bold
To press unbidden on our privacy.

KINGSTON.

By the King's special mandate, I attach
Your Highness.

QUEEN.

Stay, Sir, as you hope for mercy.
My mother! she is old and fond—her heart
Will break. Dear Mother—back—go back—the King,
Willing to do your daughter honour, sends
Good Kingston and his guard. God pardon me!
The first untruth that e'er defiled my lips.
Now, Sir, your message: the King's Grace, I heard,
In his displeasure for some weighty cause,
Commands his Queen to prison; I obey, Sir.

KINGSTON.

Your Majesty must hold yourself in readiness
T' imbark on the instant for the Tower.

QUEEN.

The Tower!
Oh, mother! mother! that the time should come
When I should wish thee in thy quiet grave.
My child—that I should wish thee yet unborn;—
Shall I find justice, Sir? (3)

KINGSTON.

The meanest subject
In all the realm would not impeach the equity
Of the King's Grace with such a dangerous doubt.

[*Queen bursts into laughter.*

Your Highness!

QUEEN.

Start ye thus to see me laugh?
There 's laughter that is grief's most bitter language,
Laughter that hath no mirth—and such is mine.
Lieutenant of the Tower, I tell thee this:

I've done, Sir, in my days, some good, through Christ;
If they misjudge my cause, yea, but a jot,
The fiery indignation from above
Shall blast the bosom of this land, the skies
Shall be as brass, nor rain nor drop of dew
Shall moisten the adust and gaping earth.

KINGSTON.

I would beseech your Highness to compose
Your too distemper'd mind.

QUEEN.

Where are the Bishops,
The holy Bishops? They will plead my cause,
And make my enemies kneel at my footstool.
I needs must laugh, Sir, but I'll weep anon,
Weep floods, weep life blood, weep till every heart
Shall ache and burst to see me. Now I'll kneel—
Behold me kneel!—and imprecate Heaven's vengeance
If I'm not guiltless. Come—away—away—
Is your barge ready? Sooner to my judgment,
Sooner to my deliverance.—So, back
To those I dare not name, I dare not think of.

The Garden as before.

Angelo, Mark Smeaton.

ANGELO.

Good youth, I know not if it grieve me more,
Thy fair preferment thus is nipp'd i' the bud,
Or give me joy that thou hast 'scaped the snares
That might have limed thy soul.

MARK.

Is it then true, Sir?
Is 't possible? Thou art all truth, thou wilt not
Torture my heart with such a hideous falsehood.
There was a rude tall fellow with a halberd,
Who spake of it, and with his villainous jests
And fiendish laughter tainted the Queen's name,
Her snowy, spotless, air-embalming name!
I told him to his teeth he lied; and if

His scoffing fellows had not troop'd around him,
I 'd struck him to the earth.

ANGELO.

Rash boy, beware!
This sounds like treason.

MARK.

If the King himself
Set such example to high heaven, cast off
Its richest bounties with such insolent scorn,
What wonder if ingratitude become
The fashion of his court, and the most favour'd
Change to the blackest traitors?

ANGELO.

Mark, 'tis true
The Queen is order'd prisoner to the Tower—
Most true; yet know'st thou not the worst: the King
Has changed to such a deadly hate against her,
That she must die ——

MARK.

Die! die!—No, Sir, no soul

Will load itself with such a deep damnation:
Earth would break out in execration, Heaven
With unexampled thunders interdict
The horrible sentence!

ANGELO.

Youth, I 'll trust thee farther.
Come hither, close—thy love to thy lost mistress
Warrants my somewhat dangerous confidence:
She stands between the King and a new lust—
He must be widow'd, e'er his guilty heart
Glut its foul appetite.

MARK.

Oh! reverend Father,
Does not thy flesh grow cold, thy holy heart
Sicken still more and more at this bad world?
For me, for me, she will so hallow death—
She will so darken and make void this earth
At her departure—I and all true servants
Will seek out our untimely graves, to attend,

Adore her, in a better world; at least,
Not live in this, when sunless of her presence.

ANGELO.

Now, as a heretic I love her not,
But yet my charity would not she were cast,
Where she must perish body and soul in hell;
I 'd have her live—live on, in shame and sorrow;
For sorrow is the mother of true penitence.

MARK.

Is there no way to save her?

ANGELO.

None.

MARK.

Then, farewell
All hope, all joy in this world's wilderness,
A barren waste of sand, the fountain dried
That was its life and gladness.—

ANGELO.

None, but that
At which our nature shudders, that would damn

The name to blackest branded infamy,
Would peril the eternal soul, would give
The fiends such awful vantage, by a crime,
A wilful crime, so like th' accursed Judas,
That good men would not stay to seek the cause,
But heap the head with merciless execration.
Where shall we find, in these degenerate days,
Devotion more than Roman?—Who will risk
His fame, his soul, to save a woman's life,
And give a heretic time to pluck the brand
Of her lost soul out of hell fire?

MARK.

Good Father,
Wrap not thy speech in darkness.

ANGELO.

If the King,
On some just plea (and these new Gospellers
Do admit none but foul adultery)
Were but divorced—how long, how honourably
Liv'd the Imperial Catherine!—which were best—

Her spotless name be tainted, or her body
Writhe on a scaffold, and her soul in flames?

MARK.

Horrible! horrible!—to live with name
Spotted with shame, or die for aye!——

ANGELO.

E'en so—
To bear a branded life, nor maid, nor widow,
Nor wife; for who would wed a tainted outcast?
She were beneath the lowest groom.

MARK.

True, true.
On, I beseech you, Sir.

ANGELO.

Do we not force
The deadliest poison down the best-lov'd lips,
If, by its wholesome intervention, life
Be prison'd in the mortal frame? We hate
At first the stern physician, but erewhile
The wiser heart o'erflows with grateful love.

MARK.

Good reverend Sir, tell me at once—directly,
With no prudential riddling in thy phrase,
What must he do would save the Queen?

ANGELO.

Avouch,
And with a solemn oath, in the face of Heaven,
That they have done together that foul sin
That taints the lips to speak, the heart to think on.

MARK.

Oh! but 't must be a nobler perjury.
Who would believe th' impossible falsity
Averr'd by baser lips?

ANGELO.

Those that would fain
Believe, are ne'er o'er-nice or scrupulous.

MARK.

Too much at once, with falsehood to blaspheme
Such goodness, on this side of Heaven unknown,
And be a base and perjured wretch!

ANGELO.

The Church,
On meet occasion—and what cause more noble
Than possible redemption of a soul
Like hers, sold captive to the heretic crew?—
Hath power to absolve the guilt of falsest oaths.

MARK.

Dost say so?

ANGELO.

Oh! that soft luxurious neck
Bare on the cold dark block to lie, the axe
Come gleaming down with horrid expedition—

MARK.

I'll do't——

ANGELO.

Thou! soft and timorous boy!

MARK.

I'll do't
If fiends stand plucking at my soul, and Hell
Yawn at my feet! Thou, Father, thou wilt case

My soul in adamantine resolution.
I 'll save her, if I die, on earth—for ever!
Do with me as thou wilt—I 'll speak, I 'll swear,
I 'll pull down good men's imprecations, Heaven's—
No, Heaven will pardon if I save the heavenly!
Upon my head rain curses, contumelies,
She will erewhile be taught to bless me; ways
Will sure be found to teach her why I 've dared
Thus 'gainst my nature, bold and false—she 'll know it,
She 'll know it all—my pains, my hopes, my truth!—

Anne Boleyn landing at the Tower.

Sir William Kingston, Guards.

QUEEN.

Here—here, then, all is o'er!—Oh! awful walls,
Oh! sullen towers, relentless gates, that open
Like those of Hell, but to receive the doom'd,
The desperate—Oh! ye black and massy barriers,
But broken by yon barr'd and narrow loopholes,
How do ye coop from this, God's sunshine world
Of freedom and delight, your world of woe,
Your midnight world, where all that live, live on
In hourly agony of death! Vast dungeon,
Populous as vast, of your devoted tenants!
Long ere our bark had touch'd the fatal strand,
I felt your ominous shadows darken o'er me,
And close me round; your thick and clammy air,

As though 'twere loaded with dire imprecations,
Wailings of dying and of tortured men,
Tainted afar the wholesome atmosphere.

KINGSTON *(to the Guard).*

Advance your halberds.

QUEEN.

Oh! Sir, pause—one look,
One last long look, to satiate all my senses.
Oh! thou blue cloudless canopy. just tinged
With the faint amber of the setting sun,
Where one by one steal forth the modest stars
To diadem the sky:—thou noble river,
Whose quiet ebb, not like my fortune, sinks
With gentle downfall, and around the keels
Of those thy myriad barks mak'st passing music:—
Oh! thou great silent city, with thy spires
And palaces, where I was once the greatest,
The happiest—I, whose presence made a tumult
In all your wondering streets and jocund marts:—
But most of all, thou cool and twilight air,

That art a rapture to the breath! The slave,
The beggar, the most base down-trodden outcast,
The plague-struck livid wretch, there's none so vile,
So abject, in your streets, that swarm with life—
They may inhale the liquid joy Heaven breathes—
They may behold the rosy evening sky—
They may go rest their free limbs where they will:
But I—but I, to whom this summer world
Was all bright sunshine; I, whose time was noted
But by succession of delights——Oh! Kingston,
Thou dost remember, thou wert then Lieutenant,
'Tis now—how many years?—my memory wanders—
Since I set forth from yon dark low-brow'd porch,
A bride—a monarch's bride—King Henry's bride!
Oh! the glad pomp, that burn'd upon the waters—
Oh! the rich streams of music that kept time
With oars as musical—the people's shouts,
That call'd Heaven's blessings on my head, in sounds
That might have drown'd the thunders——I've more need
Of blessing now, and not a voice would say it.

KINGSTON.

Your Grace, no doubt, will long survive this trial.

QUEEN.

Sir, Sir, it is too late to flatter me:
Time was I trusted each fond possibility,
For hope sate queen of all my golden fortunes;
But now——

KINGSTON.

Day wears, and our imperious mandate
Brooks no delay—advance.

QUEEN.

Back, back, I say!—
I will not enter! Whither will ye plunge me?
Into what chamber, but the sickly air
Smells all of blood—the black and cobweb'd walls
Are all o'ertraced by dying hands, who 've noted
In the damp dews indelible their tale
Of torture—not a bed nor straw-laid pallet
But bears th' impression of a wretch call'd forth
To execution. Will ye place me there,

Where those poor babes, their crook-back'd uncle murder'd,
Still haunt?—Inhuman hospitality!
Look there! look there! fear mantles o'er my soul
As with a prophet's robe, the ghostly walls
Are sentinel'd with mute and headless spectres,
Whose lank and grief-attenuated fingers
Point to their gory and dissever'd necks,
The least a lordly noble, some like princes:
Through the dim loopholes gleam the haggard faces
Of those, whose dark unutterable fate
Lies buried in your dungeons' depths; some wan
With famine, some with writhing features fix'd
In the agony of torture.—Back! I say:
They beckon me across the fatal threshold,
Which none may pass and live.

KINGSTON.

The deaths of traitors,
If such have died within these gloomy towers,
Should not appal your Grace with such vain terrors;

The chamber is prepared where slept your Highness
When last within the Tower.

QUEEN.

Oh! 'tis too good
For such a wretch—a death-doom'd wretch as me.
My Lord, my Henry—he that call'd me forth
Even from that chamber, with a voice more gentle
Than flutes o'er calmest waters—will not wrong
Th' eternal Justice—the great law of Kings!
Let him arraign me—bribe as witnesses
The angels that behold our inmost thoughts,
He'll find no crime but loving him too fondly;
And let him visit that with his worst vengeance.
Come, Sir, your wearied patience well may fail:
On to that chamber, where I slept so sweetly,
When guiltier far than now. On—on, good Kingston.

Whitehall.

KING HENRY *and Attendants.*

KING.

'Sdeath! ye're all traitors: the King's bed defiled,
And by his grooms, and ye must pause and parley
For proof and witness! Find me demonstration,
Or I'll be law, witness, and judge. A King
Not to cast off a wanton from his bed,
But must be trammel'd, thwarted, check'd, control'd
By quirks of law, old formal statutes, rolls
Of parchment scribbled o'er with musty phrases!
I'll let you know our will's this kingdom's law.
Where's Norreys?

ATTENDANT.

He awaits your Highness' pleasure.

KING.

Come hither, Norreys: we have loved, have trusted you—
Could ye find out no nobler way than this
Of being a traitor? could your daring lust
Stoop to no humbler paramour than our Queen?

NORREYS.

Your pardon, Sire, but save your Highness' presence,
Show me the man dare taint my name with treason,
I'd dash my gauntlet in his face, and choke
Th' audacious lie within his venomous throat.
And more, excepting still my Liege's person,
Whoe'er hath slander'd the Queen's honour, be it
With me, or Knight far worthier of her favour,
I do defy that man to mortal battle,
Body to body, as a Knight—I'll prove him
The most convicted, recreant, foulest slanderer,
Whose breath e'er soil'd a Lady's spotless name!

KING.

Thou hast done us service, Norreys; for that reason,
Though we impeach our honour by our mercy,

Confess, if treacherous opportunity
Or her too easy virtue did allure thee,
(For in the heat and wild distemperature
Of passion, noblest souls forget themselves).
Be bold, be dauntless, but be true: we pledge
The honour of a King, to give thee back
Thy forfeit life; for look ye, she shall die—
She and her minions!—Stand thou forth our witness,
Perchance, beside thy life, our grace may find
Some meet return.

NORREYS.

I do beseech your Highness,
What act of mine in all my life avouches
The slanderous hope, to buy or life, or what
I value more, my Sov'reign's gracious favour,
I'd perjure mine own soul, accuse the blameless?
My Liege, you are abused—foully abused!
Some devil hath beset your easy ear.
If you strike off this unoffending head,
Your Majesty will lose a faithful servant—

That's soon replaced; but for the Queen, I say,
And will maintain it with my life, the best,
The chastest Queen, the closest nun in Europe,
Is Messalina to a Vestal——

KING.

Off!
Away with him to the Tower.—What! have we stoop'd
Thus to be gracious, to be scorn'd and rated,
And by our slaves?

The above. *Winchester.*

KING.

Why how now, Winchester?
Another Churchman come t' impeach his King,
And with mock charitable incredulity
Arraign his justice? I'd but now a missive
From Cranmer;—he, forsooth, good blameless man,
Knowing no sin himself, believes there's none
In others.—'Sdeath! I'll hear no more excuses;

The fact 's as clear, or shall be, as yon Sun.
Thou think'st her guiltless?

GARDINER.

Till this hour, my Liege,
I could have pledged my life, sworn strongest oaths
That such a monstrous sin—a sin that darkens
The annals of mankind, makes us suspect
Some moral plague broke out in human nature—
Had been impossible. Oh! best and greatest,
That best and greatest to ungrateful men
Should be a licence thus to wrong the bounties
By which they lived!—And that the Queen—raised up
From a Knight's daughter to the throne of England—
A partner of King Henry's bed—the strange,
Th' unnatural act doth give itself the lie!
It doth out argue closest demonstration,
And make us rather deem our senses traitors
Than trust the assurance of most damning proofs.

KING.

Ha! proofs!

GARDINER.

Would there were none, my Liege, who bears
Tidings of shame to an abused husband,
That husband too a King, a glorious King—
Sire, my ungracious presence still will seem
A base remembrancer of these foul deeds,
Odious as they——

KING.

Your proofs, good Prelate, proofs.

GARDINER.

Is the confession of the guilty, forced
By no stern tension of the searching rack,
Nor laceration of the bleeding flesh,
But free, unbribed, unsought——

KING.

Ha! which?

GARDINER.

My Liege,
'Tis that outdoes all record of old crime,
Makes true all tales of fabulous wantonness;

It is the boy—the beardless boy!—Oh! lust,
Blind as unbridled, frantic as impure,
That no discrimination knows, nor choice
Of base from noble, foul from fair—to fall
From the allow'd embrace of such a King——

KING.

Now, by St. Paul! thou wear'st our patience.—Speak,
How got ye this? look ye confirm it.

GARDINER.

Sire,
May 't please your Highness, that a holy Friar,
Albeit I know your Grace for weightiest reasons
Mistrusts their order, hath perpetual access
Unto the prisoner Smeaton.

KING.

Ha! a priest
I' the plot—why then 'tis ripe and pregnant. Gardiner,
We are bound to thee. My Lord of Winchester,
Look, thou make good this charge against our Queen,
Or, by St. Paul! thou shalt have cause to rue it.

So, back to Greenwich; we'll go hunt the deer!
Blow horns—yell dogs—we'll have a gorgeous day!
The Sun is in the Heavens, and our high heart
Is mounting with him. Off—to horse—to horse.

The Tower.

QUEEN.

"Blessed are those that weep."—Oh! truth of truths,
Not understood till felt—thou grace of Heaven,
Spirit of Christ, thou didst not all forsake me,
When my whole life was like a banquet—served
By Pride and Luxury—dangerous cup-bearers.
Prayers, all unwonted on the dainty couch,
Where Queens are lapt in purple, fail'd not me;
Mine heart, a place forbid to pain or sorrow,

Thou didst incline to other's grief : I read
In the deep lines of woe-worn cheeks, the bliss
Of resignation to the Eternal will ;
And felt, admired, adored the Christian beauty
Of graces that I had no scope to practise.
But now, oh Christ ! that thou vouchsafest me
The mercy of affliction—oh ! the warmth
Of prayer that burns upon my lips, the deep,
The full religion that o'erflows my heart.
My cited thoughts stand ready at my call,
And undistracted memory ranges o'er
My map of life—where it is wilderness
Or weed-o'ergrown, pours streams of penitence ;
But where the sunshine of Heaven's grace, though cross'd
By hasty clouds of earthly passion, gleams
Upon the golden harvest of good deeds,
It glorifies that Sun in humblest thankfulness.
Thee, therefore, amiable prison, thee—
Oh ! Solitude—dreadful in apprehension ;
When present, to the friendless, the best friend !

Henceforth will I esteem, as much beyond
The pride and press of courts, as I feel nearer
To Heaven within you.

Queen, Cranmer.

QUEEN.

Good my Lord Archbishop,
I will not wrong thee by the idle question
Why here? 'Tis sorrow's dwelling, and thou art here
But in obedience to thy heart and function.

CRANMER.

I come not, Lady, to erect anew
The much misused Confessional, where Sins
Best hid in shameful silence, or wrung forth
In voiceless anguish, to Heaven's midnight ear,
Are acted o'er again in foul recital:—
But oh, if thou art fallen, the saintliest pupil
In our young school of Christian graces, thou
That to the living fountain of the Gospel

Cam'st duly, to draw forth the eternal waters,
What infamy will blacken o'er our cause.
A horror of deep darkness hath oppress'd
The Church, that waits in awful hope th' event.

QUEEN.

Cranmer, behold this book, my sole companion,
Yet whose sweet converse makes my prison day
So short, I 'm fain t' encroach upon the night.
Sir, were I guilty (and in truth I know
My crime but vaguely), there 's a passage here
Of one detected in such nameless sin,
That had been blotted with my scalding tears:
'Tis stainless, and in truth unread; nor ask I
If my accusers are less deep in Sin.
If I am guilty, let who will cast first
The avenging stone, and heap the death upon me.

CRANMER.

Heaven's Grace be praised! but oh! the obdurate King.

QUEEN.

There 's death in thy sad looks: speak, I 'll endure it.

He that has placed this cross upon my shoulders
Will give me strength to bear it. I defy not,
With boastfulness unfeminine, the shame,
The agony; nor yet ungrateful speak
As weary of a world only too full
Of joyance. Thou, my child, would'st well rebuke
Thy mother's selfish soul if she could leave thee
Without a rending of her heart-strings: thou
Not less, my mother! most of all, my husband!
If unreluctant I could load thy soul
With the foul crime of my judicial murder;
Even our afflicted Church may ill sustain
The loss of my unworthy aid.

CRANMER.

Oh! rate not
Thus low your faithful service: farewell now
Vain hope, that the whole land should hear the Word
Of God go forth on all the winds; no more
Fatigue the deaf cold Saint with fruitless pray'r,
Or kiss with pilgrim lips the unheeding shrine:

That not a village, not a silent hamlet
In mountain solitude, or glen, of traveller
Untrod, should want its sabbath bell to knoll
To purest worship: that a holy priesthood,
Chaste, simple, to themselves alone severe,
Poor below luxury, rich beyond contempt,
Environ'd with their heaven-led families,
Should with their lives most saintly eloquence
Preach Christ—Christ only:—while all reverend Learning
In arch'd cathedral cloister, or the grove
That bosoms deep the calm and thoughtful college,
Should heavenward meditate, and bring to earth
The knowledge learnt amid the golden stars.
But now shall irreligious Avarice
Pluck from his lips the Scholar's dole—the Temples
Lie desecrate in ruin—or the night
Of ancient ignorance and error sink
On the dark land for ever and for ever.

QUEEN.

Alas! Sir, why enamour me with life,
Making me deem myself of value here,

Here in this world, which I must leave?—So young
To be cut off, and so untimely! cast
A blooming branch to the cold grave! Yet Heaven,
Whose cause it is, will raise defenders up.
My child! my daughter! oh prophetic soul!
I dare not trust, yet will not disbelieve
Thy glorious omens. Good my Lord Archbishop,
Thou 'lt not endure these knees should grow to earth,
To less than Heaven; but I adjure thee, watch
Her ripening spirit, sow the seed, ne'er lost
Though cast on the waste waters.

CRANMER.

Heaven but grant
The life and power!

QUEEN.

T' another subject now,
My sins, my sins!

CRANMER.

Of them to Christ alone;—
That heart bleeds freeliest that inly bleeds.

QUEEN.

Bear with me yet, my Lord, for I must tax
Your kindness further. There is one, but one
In all this world, my memory names, hath cause
To think of me as of her enemy,
The Lady Mary; for a dying woman
Entreat her pardon. I 've a letter here,
Writt'n to the King with such poor eloquence
As I am mistress of: beseech thee hear it;
Then, if thou wilt, be thou the bearer of it.

The Letter. (4)

" Sire, your displeasure and imprisonment
Are all so strange to me, that what to write
I know not, what t' excuse: you sent erewhile
Mine enemy to urge me to confess,
And so secure your favour;—willingly,
If to confess a truth might purchase me
My ne'er-despised safety—but imagine not
Your wife will own a sin ne'er soil'd her thoughts.

Never had Prince a wife so loyal—duteous,
So to affection true, as your Anne Boleyn.
That name and place had been my life's content,
God and your Grace so willing it; yet ne'er
Forgot I, that the fancy which had raised me,
Might wander to another fairer object.
You chose me, nor deserving, nor desiring,
Your Queen and Partner:—having so honour'd me,
Good, your Grace, let no light unworthy motive,
Nor my malicious enemies' false council,
Withdraw your favour from me, least the stain,
Th' indelible stain of a disloyal heart,
Attaint your duteous wife and royal daughter.
Try me, good King, but with a lawful trial,
Not with my foes my judges—try me openly;
So shall my innocence shine forth as day,
Your nice and jealous honour be absolved,
Th' opprobrious voice of the world's slander silenced:—
Or by the undoubted plainness of my guilt,

Your Grace escape all censure of rash harshness,
And God and man approve th' extremest rigour
Of vengeance on a lawless wife:—then freely
Your Grace may follow that your heart's affection,
Fix'd where I know, but where I may not name.
But if my death, worse than my death, my shame,
In your high councils is already doom'd,
I make my prayer to God to pardon you,
To blot this most unprincely usage of me
From your account, when thou and I shall meet
Before his judgment throne, where I shall stand,
Judge howsoe'er the world, in saintly whiteness.
I 've but one more request; on me alone,
If it must fall, fall all thy wrath—Oh! touch not
The innocent lives of those poor gentlemen
In prison for my sake. If e'er thy wife
Found favour in thy sight—if e'er thine ear
Found music in Anne Boleyn's name—deny not
This last, this dying prayer. No more I trouble thee.

The Holy Trinity keep your good Grace
In health, life, happiness, and holiness.
 Written from my doleful prison in the Tower,
 Your loyal and most faithful wife, Anne Boleyn."

CRANMER.

God, that can make the marble heart like wax,
Make this his instrument of grace!

QUEEN.

Amen.

OGI'S SARASWATI MAHAL
THE TANJORE MA

THE TAYLORE MAH

A Prison in the Tower.

Angelo.

ANGELO.

Down, impotent remorse! temptation, down!
My soul abjures thee! and thou, carnal pride,
That wilt not use the means this world calls base
For that great end, t' advance the faith of Christ!
What if the span of some few mortal lives
Be somewhat shrunk, some eyes untimely closed
On this world's Sun, will not ten thousand souls
Live through eternity's unfathom'd years,
And a whole nation walk in moral light?
'Tis but the wise relentlessness of Heaven.
Doth the dread earthquake feel remorse, that makes
A populous city one vast tomb, where Guilt
And Innocence lie side by side? Does Pity
Pale the blue cheek of pestilence, that blasts

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Whole nations? Doth the sweeping deluge pause,
And hold suspended its vast weight of waters,
To give the righteous time to fly the ruin?
The best, the wisest, holiest Saints and Pontiffs
Have sent fierce war with undiscerning vengeance
To waste the heretic's land; for though just Heav'n
Turn from the field of carnage—from the city
Made desolate, far rather it beholds them,
Than the fierce tossings of the infernal pit,
And Hell made rich with everlasting souls.—
Here are but two; one guiltless, and one guilty.
On—and be fearless—on, my soul!

He sleeps;

Poor wretch, thou 'lt sleep ere long more deep—he dreams.

MARK, *(in his sleep).*

Her voice—her voice—ye heard her lute-like voice,
Who loosed these bonds, who led me forth from death.
'Twas I, your servant, I——

Where am I?—who

And what art thou?—The Father Angelo!

Oh! sleep, sweet sleep, art thou a prophetess,
Or but a gracious and most kind deceiver?
Oh! palace builder—oh! thou Queen of bridals,
That in the silent prison mak'st the bells
Sound for the jocund marriage—oh! magician,
With realm of witchcraft wide as thought—time, place,
And circumstance, combine, and shift, and change,
Like spirits on thy sorcerous wand that wait,
And all things are that are not—night is day,
Grief joy, death life, th' impossible becomes
Breathing reality; thou dost take up
Th' unpillow'd beggar, and dost proudly seat him
Upon a throne—dost bring the Queen of queens
Down to the level of a boy like me.

ANGELO.

Mark Smeaton, I am here to know thy purpose,
Thy calm deliberate purpose: yet 'tis time
To disavow thy dangerous evidence—
Yet, but not long: I saw the Judges pass
Across the court, and one that bare an axe

Went first, as to denote they sate in judgment
Upon a capital crime.

MARK.

Then she must die—
If by mine oath she is found guilty, who
Shall intercept that bloody instrument?—

ANGELO.

There has been stir and parleying to and fro
Concerning a pre-contract, said to exist
Between the Queen, when young, and the Lord Piercy;
And wherefore this, but the relenting King
Would be content to break the chain asunder
That galls him.

MARK.

Yet to swear—before high Heaven—
All seeing Heaven!—Heaven, that in thunder spake
The stern command, "Thou shalt not bear false witness!"

ANGELO.

'Tis well:—what is't to thee if the fierce King
Add to his ruthless soul the crime of murder;

And one unhousel'd heretic more bear down,
Her soul all leprous with its gangrene taint,
To burn for endless ages? I had brought
The deposition, that but wants thy signet
And oath before some witnesses that wait
I' the court without—but to the flames with it,
And to the block with her—not worth the jeoparding
The immortal spirit——

MARK.

Not worth!—if 'twere but death,
To go to sleep in the cold grave, and know
That she walk'd harmless in the living world.
Oh! Sir, but Hell has some thrice darkest chamber,
Some outcast dwelling, where the perjured hear
The hissing and the execration of the damn'd.

ANGELO.

Crime is not crime but in its motive:—thou
Art false but to be true—false to her fame,
True to her better interests.—But I came not
To argue. Yet when thou go'st hence, take heed

Thou pass not o'er the hill where Traitors die;
Lest trammel'd in the press, thou 'rt forced to see,
From first to last, the hideous deed—the stroke,
The agony, the despair, the writhing hands,
The sever'd neck, the cry to Heaven, that Heaven
Shall turn away from, and——

MARK.

Give me the paper;
Let me not read it, lest its hideous falsehood
Shake my faint resolution. There—'tis done!

ANGELO.

What, ho! within,—ye see this youth deliver
This instrument as his own deed.

WITNESSES.

We do.

ANGELO.

Now in and sleep again.

MARK.

Sleep!—never more;
The perjured do not sleep; the slanderers, those

That bear false witness—yet Heaven knows, and Heaven
Will pardon—and she too, like Heaven, will know,
Like Heaven will pardon! Sir, I cannot think
Thou hast deceived me; if thou hast, the tortures
Of all eternity will be too short
T' avenge this wicked subornation!

ANGELO.

Peace!

MARK.

Oh! pardon, Sir, my thoughts do swim so strangely;
Things all so monstrous and incredible
Have come to pass, there's nought that seems too strange,
And nothing is but what could never be.
That thou, a man of such strict saintliness,
Should'st be so false, finds credit with me only
Because it is impossible, and far
Beyond the reach and scope of our belief.

A Hall in the Tower.

Duke of Norfolk, Duke of Suffolk, Marquis Exeter, and others as Judges. The Queen, and Officers.

NORFOLK.

Read our commission.

OFFICER.

Thomas Duke of Norfolk,
The Duke of Suffolk, Marquis Exeter,
Earl Arundel, and certain other peers
Here present; ye are met in the Tower of London,
By special mandate from the King, t' arraign
Of certain dangerous and capital treasons
Against the peace and person of the King
Anne, Queen of England.

CRIER.

Come into the Court
Anne, Queen of England.

QUEEN.

Here.

OFFICER.

Anne, Queen of England,
(Be seated, it beseems your Grace's station,)
Look on this Court, these peers of England, met,
By the King's high commission, to pass sentence
Between thyself and the King's Grace—hast ought
T' object ere thou 'rt arraign'd ?

QUEEN.

I 'd thought, my Lords,
It had stood more with the King's justice, more
With the usage of the land, a poor weak woman
Had not been forced t' abide your awful ordeal
Alone and unadvised ; that Counsel, learned
In forms of law, and versed by subtle practice
In forcing from the bribed or partial witnesses
Th' unwilling truth, had been assigned me.—Well,
Be 't as it is—I have an advocate
Gold cannot fee, nor circumstance appal ;

An advocate, whose voiceless eloquence,
If it should fail before your earthly court,
Shall in a higher gain me that acquittal
Mine enemies' malice may deny me here—
Mine Innocence. Proceed.

OFFICER.

Anne, Queen of England,
Thou stand'st arraign'd, that treasonously and foully,
To the dishonour of his Highness' person
And slander of his issue, thou hast conspired
With certain Traitors, now convict and sentenced—
George, Viscount Rochford, Henry Norreys, Knight,
Sir William Brereton, Francis Weston, Knights,
And one Mark Smeaton,——

QUEEN.

Pause, Sir; heard I rightly
My Brother's name, Lord Rochford's? I beseech you,
My Lords, what part bears he in this Indictment?

OFFICER.

The same with all the rest.

QUEEN.

Great God of Thunder
Refrain thy bolt!—my Lords, there are among ye
Have noble Sisters, if ye deem this possible,
I do consent ye deem it true. Go on, Sir.

OFFICER.

And one Mark Smeaton.

QUEEN.

Would they make me smile
With iteration of that name—a meet
And likely lover for King Henry's Queen!

NORFOLK.

Read, now, the Depositions. Each and all,
My Lords, ye have perused that dangerous paper
Written by the Lady Wingfield, now deceased—
Heard sundry evidence of words unseemly
And most unroyal spoken by her Grace.

QUEEN.

The Depositions! good, my Lord—I 'd thought
T' have seen my accusers face to face: is this
The far renown'd and ancient English Justice?

OFFICER.

The Deposition of Lord Viscount Rochford :—
That for th' impossible and hideous charge,
His soul abhors it with such sickly loathing,
Words cannot utter it: to stab the babe
I' the mother's arms, to beat the brains from out
A father's hoary head, had been to nature
Less odious, less accurst.

QUEEN.

There spake my brother.

OFFICER.

The Deposition of Sir Henry Norreys :—
That the Queen's Grace is as the new-born babe
For him—for others, he will prove her so
In mortal combat 'gainst all England.

Sir Francis Weston—doth deny all guilt,
With an asseveration, if in thought
Or word he hath demean'd her Grace's honour,
He imprecates Heaven's instant thunder-bolt.

Sir William Brereton—if all women here
In England were as blameless as her Grace,
The Angels would mistake this land for Heaven.

Mark Smeaton doth confess——

QUEEN.

Confess!

OFFICER.

That twice
In guilty commerce with the Queen——

QUEEN.

My Lords,
Who is it hath suborn'd this wretched boy?
I do arraign that man, in the dread court
Whose sentence is eternity! My soul
Shall rise in judgment, when the Heavens are fire
Around Christ's burning throne, against that man;
And say on earth he murder'd my poor body,
And that false swearing boy's lost soul in Hell.

OFFICER.

This full confession—sign'd, and in the sight
Of witnesses deliver'd, in due form
Of law, in every part clear and authentic.

NORFOLK.

Anne, Queen of England, ere this high commission
Pass to their final sentence, hast thou aught
To urge upon their Lordships in defence
Or palliation of these fearful charges?

QUEEN.

My Lords! th' unwonted rigour of the King
And mine imprisonment have something shaken
My constant state of mind: I do beseech you,
If I speak not so reverently or wisely
Of the King's justice as I ought, bear with me.
I will not say, that some of you, my Lords,
For my religion and less weighty motives,
Are my sworn enemies—'twere to disparage
The unattainted whiteness of my cause,

That had defied the malice of the basest,
Nor deigns mistrust the high-soul'd enmity
Of English Nobles. When that I have forced you
To be the vouchers for my honesty,
My fame's pure gold shall only blaze the brighter,
Tried in the furnace of your deadly hate!
My Lords, the King, whose bounties, numberless
And priceless, neither time nor harsher usage
Shall ever raze from my heart's faithful tablets—
The King, I say, took me an humble maid,
With not a jewel but my maiden fame:
That I 'm his wife, seeing the infinite distance
Between my Father's daughter and a throne,
Argues no base or lowly estimate.
Think ye a crown so galling to the brows,
And a Queen's name so valueless, that false
And recreant to the virtue which advanced me,
I should fall off thus basely?—I am a mother,
My Lords, and hoped that my right royal issue
Should rule this realm: had I been worse than worst,

Looser than loosest—think ye I 'd have peril'd
The pride of giving birth to a line of Kings,
And robb'd my children of their sceptred heritage?
Your proofs, my Lords!—some idle words, that spoken
By less than me, had been forgotten air:
The force of words dwells not on their mere letters,
But in the air, time, place, and circumstance
In which they 're utter'd—the poor laughing child
Will call himself a King, will ye indite him
Of treason? If less solemnly I 've spoken
Or gravely than beseem'd my queenly state,
'Twas partly that his Grace would take delight
In hearing my light laughing words glance off,
As is the wont in gay and courtly France:—
Partly, that raised from such a lowly state
Haply to fall again, I watch'd my spirit,
Lest with an upstart pride I might offend
The noble Knights whose service honour'd me.
If thus I 've err'd, through humbleness familiar,
Heaven will forgive the fault, though man be merciless!

To the rest, my Lords! knowing nought living dared
Attaint my fame, my enemies have ransacked
The Grave; the Lady Wingfield hath been summon'd
To speak against me from her tomb—and what?—
Vague rumours! that I will not say base Envy
(I'll have more charity to the dead than they
To me), but pardonable error, zeal
For the King's honour, may have swollen to charges,
That if ye trust, not the shrined Vestal's pure.
My Lords, my Lords, ye better know than I
What subtle arts, what gilded promises
Have been employ'd to make the noble Knights
My fellow criminals, my Accusers! which
Might not have purchased life by this base service,
And crept into a late and natural grave?
But let me ask, my Lords, which, base enough,
And so disloyal, as t' abuse thus grossly
The bounties of so good a King, had risen
To this wild prodigality of honour,
For a loose woman to lay down his head

And taint his name, his blood, with infamy?
For this besotted boy!—my Lords, I know not
If to rebut this charge with serious speech;
Such as it is, my Lords, this modest beauty
Made me a Queen, and other Kings disdain'd not
To lay their flattering incense at its shrine.
My Lords, there 's none amongst your noblest sons,
Rich in ancestral titles, none so moulded
By nature's cunning symmetry, so high
In station, but my favour had endangered
His truth t' his King:—and I, I that disdain'd
Less than a crown, with wayward wantonness
Demean me to a half form'd, base born slave!—
I do demand—if that ye will not damn
Your names to everlasting infamy—
Here, in this court, this instant, ye bring forth
This boy: if with one word I force you not
To do me justice on this monstrous slander—
Do with me as ye will. I 've done, and now
Renew an old petition:—if the King,

Abused and cheated of his wonted mercies,
Hath sworn my death;—so order it, I pray you,
That on my head alone fall all his wrath:
Let these untainted gentlemen go free,
And mine all honour'd Brother. Spare the King
The anguish of unnecessary crime,
And with less blood defile your own fair names.

NORFOLK.

Anne, Queen of England, first this Court commands
You lay aside the state and ornaments
Of England's Queen.

QUEEN.

As cheerfully, my Lords,
As a young bride her crown of virgin flowers.

NORFOLK.

Prisoner, give ear! I, Thomas, Duke of Norfolk,
In name of all th' assembled Peers, declare
The verdict of this court:—all circumstance,
All proof, all depositions duly weigh'd,
We do pronounce thee guilty of High Treason.—

And, further, at the pleasure of the King,
Adjudge thy body to be burnt with fire,
Or thine head sever'd from thy guilty shoulders.

QUEEN.

Lord God of Hosts !—the way ! the truth ! the life !
Thou know'st me guiltless ; yet, oh ! visit not
On these misjudging men their wrongful sentence—
Shew them that mercy they deny to me.
My Lords, my Lords, your sentence I impeach not ;
Ye have, no doubt, most wise and cogent reasons,
Best heard perhaps in th' open court, to shame
The wretched evidence adduced. My Lords,
I ask no pardon of my God—for this
Of which ye've found me guilty—to the King
In person and in heart I've been most true.
Haply I've been unwise, irreverent,
And with unseemly jealousies arraign'd
His unexampled goodness. This I say not
To lengthen out my too protracted life,
For God hath given, will give me strength to die.

I 'm not so proudly honest, but the grief
Of my suspected chastity is gall
And wormwood to me; were 't not my sole treasure,
It less had pain'd me thus to see it blacken'd.
My Lords, I take my leave:—upon your heads,
Upon your families, on all this kingdom,
On him who is its head and chiefest grace,
The palm of Europe's sovereignty, may Heaven
Rain blessings to the end of time—that most,
And most abundant, his redeeming grace!

A Prison.

MAGDALENE, MARK SMEATON.

MAGDALENE.

Oh! Mark, Mark, Mark, to find thee here, and thus!
Brother, that I should come to shame through thee!
Through thee, my heart's one pride! I pray'd my way
Through mocking men to find thee. Some did spurn me,
Did almost void their rheum on me; and some
Pitied me with more barbarous charity
That I'm thy Sister; thou whom I had chosen
Before the proudest Knight of all the Court.
And thou must die—all croak'd that in mine ear,
The Ravens! All in drear accord.—

MARK.

Die! die!
Oh! yes—the solemn forms must be gone through,
And the stern sentence read and register'd.

And then!—oh then! what pride of rank, what distance
Shall keep two branded criminals asunder?
Oh! pardon me, that thus my selfish soul
Rejoice in thy debasement: thou wilt know
What I have risk'd, have suffer'd, all for thee.
Oh! what 's the world—its infamy—its pride—
To those that love? they 're their own world.

MAGDALENE.

Oh! Mark,
Dear Mark, this dreadful prison, and the awe
Of death—the guilt—oh! would I dared deny it;
The guilt hath made thee frantic: not a word
Hath meaning to mine ears—thou look'st on me,
Not as a man condemn'd to die, with eyes
All gleaming with a horrid joy.

MARK.

Thou, too,
Thou only, Magdalene, shalt find free entrance
To the retired garden of our joy.

The above. ANGELO.

MARK.

Oh! Father Angelo! is she set free?
Where is she gone? may I yet follow her,
And tell her with what violence to my soul
I've forced and bow'd myself to crime to save her?

ANGELO.

She will be free anon; thou first.

MARK.

Dost say so?
Now will I wait, and linger all unseen;
And when the massy doors roll back, and slow
The huge portcullis groans along its grooves,
And down the drawbridge falls—I shall behold her,
Along the frowning files of gloomy archers,
Come gliding like a swan on turbid waters.

ANGELO.

Deceive thyself no more—I spake of freedom,

For death it is that frees th' encumber'd spirit
From the dark prison of this world; nor she
Nor thou shall ever pass these iron gates,
But to th' appointed stroke of death.

MAGDALENE.

Look, look!
He cannot speak! he chokes, he shivers!—look,
He 's dying. Oh! already you have kill'd him.
My Brother, wake!

ANGELO.

Oh! youth, whom Heaven hath chosen
For its blind instrument to work the ruin
Of its most deadly enemy, I 'm come
To fit thee for thy sacrifice—arise
A Martyr to the glorious cause. I open
The gates of Heaven before thy mounting soul.

MARK.

Devil! no man of God! unmeasured liar!
My soul is sick at thee. Thou hold the keys
Of Heaven, thou bloody wretch forsworn? thou worse,

If worse can be than mine own perjured self,
I spurn thee, curse thee, execrate thy faith
And thee!

ANGELO.

Die, then! die lost, accurst for ever!
Go with thy leprous soul unwash'd to Hell,
To see what hideous torments wait on perjury.

MARK.

Avaunt!

ANGELO.

Weak boy and thankless, whom I 've wrought
To be a sharer in this great design;
Were thine head crown'd, thy body rough with scars
Won in the service of the Church, the joy
And pride of nations waiting on thy footsteps,
I 'd trample on thy corpse with merciless heel,
If o'er it lay my way to lift the throne
Of Peter o'er the carnal Lords of earth.

MAGDALENE.

Oh! save him—save him! I have heard thee speak

In language that might melt the stoniest hearts;
I 've heard thee pray with such soul-kindling warmth
Beside the bed of our departed Mother,
That iron bonds had burst like flax before thee.

ANGELO.

It stands not in my power; but, oh! rash youth,
Go not a rebel to the Church, to meet
The Church's Lord:—kneel, I entreat thee, kneel;
Let me not say I 've slain thy soul; confess,
Repent, and be absolved.

MARK.

Avaunt! away!—
Wash thine own soul from thine own sins: kneel thou,
Howl for thy crimes, thy treasons, and thy murders!
And, if Christ give me power to pardon thee,
'Twill more avail thee in thy hour of need
Than all thy formal conjuring absolutions.
With her—with her—the gracious, good, and chaste,
I 'll take my everlasting portion; trust
Even where she trusts; go where she goes——Oh! no,

My perjuries! my murders! when my soul
Would rise to track the starlight path of hers,
They 'll hiss me, howl me down, down, down to blackness,
To horror, now the element of my soul.

ANGELO.

The bell! It sounds for thee, it summons thee!
I hear the trampling feet down the long galleries;
The grating bolts fall back: kneel, kneel—the Church
Will pardon thy wild words—be reconciled.

MARK.

Off!—I will have no share or portion with you.
Think you your crimes and murders, ye, no Priests
Of the great God of Truth and Holiness,
Will not out-preach you from the face of earth:
This air at length shall purify itself
From your curst doctrines.

ANGELO.

Saints and Holy Angels,
Hear not his blasphemies! but thee, my daughter,
Will I bestow among some holy Sisters.

MAGDALENE.

With thee, my Brother's Murderer? thee, whose guile
Has tainted his immortal soul with sin?
Sir, I'm a weak and foolish maid; I know not
The nice distinction of your rival creeds;
But this I know—'tis not the faith of Christ,
Of Christ the merciful, the sinless Christ,
To guile an innocent youth to such a sin,
And make a murderer of a heart had paused
To take the meanest insect's life. Oh! Brother,
Dear Brother, I will die with thee; they'll leave
A corner in thy narrow bed where I
May creep and hide my weary head.

ANGELO.

Be wise.

MAGDALENE.

No—if I may not die, I'll starve—I'll beg—
I'll serve the basest and most loathsome office,
Ere owe my pittance to my Brother's murderer.

ANGELO.

They 're here—they are at the door.

MAGDALENE.

Ah !—

MARK.

Peace, my Sister !

Look you, I 'm calm. I 've hope—but not of life.
I 'll tell thee—hark ! I will go forth—I 'll stand
Before the public eye—and then and there
I will undo the deadly crime I 've done ;
Unswear what I have sworn, with such strange oaths
That they perforce shall cancel their rash doom,
And she shall live, and not quite curse my memory.
Though their drums roll, and trumpets blare, I 'll shriek
The audible truth—and then I 'll lay me down
And take my quiet death—my quivering tongue
Still murmuring of her slander'd innocence.
And God shall give me grace not to denounce thee ;
Thou shalt live on, and eat thy heart to see
Thy frustrate malice. Live, and still behold

Man after man, and kingdom after kingdom,
Fall from the faith that perjures—murders! Hark!
They 're here—oh, Magdalene!—Farewell.

MAGDALENE.

Not yet,
I 'll not part yet; there 's none to pray for thee
But I; there 's none to wind thy corpse—to weep,
To die upon it.

MARK.

Call on Christ, my Sister,
On Christ alone; cry loudly, fervently.
They 're here—come, come.

MAGDALENE.

Go on, I 'll follow thee,
Even to the brink, into the grave: go on;
Till I am pluck'd perforce from thee, I 'll follow.

ANGELO (*alone*).

Oh! thou that thrice denied'st the Lord of Life,
Yet wert the Rock on which th' Eternal Church
Was built, thou know'st, oh! Peter, that in zeal

For thy soul-saving throne, against my nature,
I 've cast away this life. Oh! if thy servant
Have ought deserved by this self sacrifice,
Thou with thy powerful intercession stand
Between his soul and endless burnings. Grant
The Masses I will pay, while life is mine,
May slake full soon the Purgatorial fires,
And gales of Paradise come breathing o'er
His rescued spirit.

So on to death, poor youth,
Not unabandon'd, not unwept by him
Whose aid thou scornest now; but thou shalt own
There, where all motives and all hearts are known.

A Chamber in the Tower.

QUEEN.

Oh! Heaven! will they keep up this heavy din
For ever, mocking me with hope, that now
For me they 're knolling—roll on roll and clash
On clash!—Oh! music most unmusical!
That never soundest but when graves are open,
And widows' hearts are breaking, and pale orphans
Wringing their hands above a silent bier.—
Four knells have rung, four now are dust—thou only
Remain'st, my Brother! thou art kneeling now,
Bare thy majestic neck——A pause—more long
Than wonted; hath the mercy of the King—
The justice rather?—shalt thou rush again
To our poor Mother's arms, and tell her yet
She 's not all childless?——Still no sound!—alas!
It may be that the rapture of deep pity,

And admiration of his noble bearing,
Suspends all hands at their blood-reeking work,
And casts a spell of silence o'er all sounds.—
Ha! thou low-rolling doubling drum—I hear thee!
Stern bell, that summon'st to no earthly temple!
Thou 'rt now a worshipper in Heaven, my brother,
And thy poetic spirit ranges free
Worlds after worlds, confest th' immortal kindred
Of the blest angels—for thy heaven-caught fire,
Still like that fire sprang upward, and made pure
Th' infected air of this world as it pass'd.
My child—my mother—they 've forbidden me
To see once more on earth your dear lov'd faces;
There 's mercy in their harshness—here 's no place
To entertain the future Queen of England,
And God hath given me courage to keep down
The mother in my heart; thou too, my parent,
What hadst thou done but torn my heart asunder,
And all distracted my calm thoughts of Heaven.

Enter SIR WILLIAM KINGSTON.

QUEEN.

Now all is o'er with those brave gentlemen—
They died, I know, Sir, as they lived, right nobly.

KINGSTON.

They gave their souls to their Redeemer, Lady,
With protestations of your Highness' innocence,
'Twas their sole care and thought in death; they dared
Heaven's utmost vengeance if they falsely swore.

QUEEN.

And that false youth, clear'd he our honour?

KINGSTON.

Loud
He shrieked and struggled, not with fear of death,
But with the burthen of some painful secret
He would unfold—the rapid executioner
Cut short his wailing.

QUEEN.

Most unrighteous speed!

KINGSTON.

Your Majesty 's prepar'd?

QUEEN.

Oh! pomp of phrase,
To tell a sinner to prepare for judgment;
And yet, I think, Christ Jesus, through thy blood,
I 'm but about to change an earthly crown
For one that 's amaranth.

There is no end
Of the unexhausted bounties of the King:
He made me first the Marchioness of Pembroke,
Duchess of Dorset, then his sceptred Queen;
And now a new advancement he prepares me,
One of Heaven's angels.—

Is it true, Sir William,
You 've brought from Calais a most dextrous craftsman
In th' art of death?—here 's much ado, good truth,
To smite asunder such a neck as this,
My own slight hands grasp easily.

Ye weep

To see me smile—I smile to see you weep.
I have no tears: I have been reading o'er
His agony that suffer'd on the cross
For such poor sinners as myself, and there
Mine eyes spent all their moisture.

KINGSTON.

We rejoice
To see your Highness meet your doom thus calmly.

QUEEN.

I am to die—what 's that?—why, thou and I
And all of us die every night; and duly
Morn to our spirits' resurrection comes
With rosy light, fresh flowers, and birds' sweet anthems;
But when our grave 's our bed, that instant comes
A morning, not of this world's treacherous light,
But fresh with palms, and musical with angels.
Oh! but a cruel, shameful, public death—
There 's no disease will let the spirit loose
With less keen anguish than the sudden axe;
And for the shame—the sense of that 's within!

I 've thoughts brook no communion or with that
Or fear. My death the Lord may make a way
T' advance his gracious purpose to this land:
There 'll be, will see a delicate timid woman
Lay down her cheerful head upon the block
As on a silken pillow; when they know
'Twas Christ that even at that dread hour rebuk'd
Weak Nature's fears, returning home, they 'll kneel
And seek that power that turns our death to triumph.—
Sir, are you ready?—they 'll allow me time
To pray even there.—Go forward, Sir, we 'll follow.

The Scaffold.

QUEEN.

My fellow subjects, I am here to die!
The law hath judged me—to the law, I bow.
He that doth know all hearts, before whose throne,
Ere ye have reach'd your homes, I shall stand trembling—
God knows—I 've lived as pure and chaste as snow
New fallen from Heaven; yet do not ye, my friends,
Presumptuous judge anew my dangerous cause,
Lest ye blaspheme against the wonted goodness
Of the King's Grace—most merciful and gentle
I 've ever known him, and if e'er betray'd
From his kind nature, by most cogent reasons.
Adore the hidden secrets of his justice
As you would Heaven's. Beseech you, my good friends,
If in my plenitude of power I 've done
Not all the good I might, ye pardon me:—

If there be here to whom I've spoken harshly
Or proudly, humbly I entreat forgiveness.
—No, Sir, I'll wear no bandage o'er mine eyes,
For they can look on death, and will not shrink.
Beseech you, Sirs, with modesty unrobe me,
And let my women have the decent charge
Of my poor body.
Now, God bless the King,
And make his Gospel shine throughout the land!

THE TANJORE MA FOGI'S SARASWATI MAHAL.

NOTES.

NOTES.

Note 1, page 41, line 5.

From the Carthusian's decimated house.

The execution of the Prior and several of the Brethren of the Carthusian Monastery for denying the King's Supremacy, was amongst the most barbarous transactions of this period, the chief guilt of which must be attributed to the unrelenting disposition of the King.

Note 2, page 68, line 4.

In that proud Prelate's heart a noble chord.

All writers agree in the unprincipled and unnatural character of the Countess of Rochford, who suffered at a subsequent period for being accessary to the criminal conduct of Queen Catharine Howard.

Note 3, page 94, line 9.

Shall I find justice, Sir?

The singular conduct and language of Anne when she was arrested is strictly historical. See Burnet's History of the Reformation.

Note 4, page 125, line 11.

The Letter.

This is little more than a versification of the celebrated letter; the authenticity of which Mr. Ellis appears to have established.

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